

"For us Christians, let us proudly declare, the supernatural and the holy — that is what history is, the only history perhaps that interests us, the only profound and profoundly real history."

— Charles Peguy

AN APOSTLE OF TWO WORLDS

Father Frederick Janssoone, O.F.M.
of Ghyvelde

by ROMAIN LEGARE, O.F.M.

translated by Raphael Brown
Franciscan Tertiary

Every year thousands of people are beginning to hear the name of Good Father Frederic Janssoone, O.F.M. In 1958, seventy thousand visitors and three hundred and forty-eight groups of pilgrims visited the Crypt-Museum at Trois Rivières, Canada.

Such figures illustrate the vitality of Good Father Frederic's present day influence among the people of French North America. The aim of this is to make him better known and loved, and to inspire in its readers the desire to imitate him, and, when occasions arise, to pray for his intercession.

The life of Good Father Frederic is a saga of simple sanctity. His life's work was to revive in a simple fashion the basic truths of our Faith in the hearts of the faithful by dramatizing the great events of our Redemption. He spent long years in the Holy Land at the shrines that are in the care of the Friars Minor. Returning to Canada, he began his life-long task building shrines to commemorate the Holy Places where our Lord had suffered and died. These exact replicas of the shrines of the Holy Land were repeated and renewed not only in Canada but throughout the United States. As the Friars began renewing devotion to the Passion of Our Lord, many centuries ago, by erecting the Stations of the Cross in the countrysides and byways of Europe, so now the more elaborate types of shrines were built by Good Father Frederic to the exact specification of the Shrines in the Holy Places where Our Lord suffered and died.

His life is an inspiration not only to the members of his Order, but to all who have heard in any way the whisper of a call to holiness. There was nothing ostentatious about his sanctity, nothing flamboyant about his penances, no austerity in his demeanor. He had the approachableness of his father, St. Francis, the kindness and courtesy of his

(continued on back flap)

Master. His simple sermons to the people, though in no way dramatic, attracted thousands. Sometimes he would spend twenty to twenty-four hours in the pulpit over a forty-eight hour period, such as during the Portiuncular Indulgence Days.

That reputation for holiness, the striking success of his various apostolic projects, the extraordinary throng of faithful at his funeral, and the growing number of favors attributed to the intervention of the Servant of God induced the religious authorities to take the necessary steps to institute a process of beatification. This process was first begun in 1927, just eleven years after Good Father Frederic's death in 1916, and has been continuing step by step since that time.

The author, Father Romain Legare, O.F.M., has used every means at his disposal to make this life of Good Father Frederic as complete as possible. His work is designed to fill an urgent need on the part of the general reading public. In approach, it is midway between a critical and a popular biography. It includes only essential references of the most authentic sources: manuscripts or published works and oral evidence.

The translator, Raphael Brown, is an outstanding Franciscan Tertiary who has contributed much to the Franciscan spirit in English-language publications. He has recently translated and edited an edition of *The Little Flowers of St. Francis*, published by Doubleday, and another book entitled *Fifty Animal Stories of St. Francis As Told By His Companions*, published by Franciscan Herald Press.

It is the fervent hope of both author and translator that this book will induce more English speaking Canadians and Americans to visit the edifying and fascinating Crypt-Museum of Good Father Frederic, which is conveniently located in Trois Rivieres on the main highway between Montreal and Quebec. In prayer at Good Father Frederic's tomb these pilgrims will have the rare privilege of imbibing some of the seraphic spirit of a modern Francis of Assisi who lived in North America in our own times.



An Apostle of Two Worlds



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AN APOSTLE OF TWO WORLDS

Father Frederic Janssoone, O.F.M.
of Ghyvelde

By
ROMAIN LEGARE, O.F.M.

Translated by
RAPHAEL BROWN
Franciscan Tertiary

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In conformity with the decrees of Pope Urban VIII, the author declares that in this work he attributes merely a human authority to events or expressions such as "saint," "saintliness," or "miracles," and that he wishes in no way to anticipate the decisions of the Holy See.

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FOREWORD

Knowing well the warm friendship which existed between the "*Bon Père Frédéric*" of Canada and the late Father Godfrey Schilling, O.F.M., founder of the Commissariat in Washington, D.C., it has been a real pleasure to write a foreword for the translation into English of the popular French life of Father Frederic Janssoone, O.F.M. This remarkable life of a saintly and apostolic Franciscan was written by a fellow Franciscan, Rev. Romain Légaré, O.F.M., under the title *Un apôtre des deux mondes* (*An Apostle of Two Worlds*). The author was considerably helped in his heavy task by the copious writings on Father Frederic by the Rev. Mathieu Marie Daunais, O.F.M., the first Vice Postulator of the Cause of Beatification of the Servant of God.

The translation has been made in a clear and facile style by that well-known author and translator, Mr. Raphael Brown, a devout member of the Third Order of St. Francis. It is a great boon for the English-reading public to have this excellent biography in English. I am sure it will do much to make Father Frederic Janssoone, O.F.M., better known and loved, and many fervent prayers will be said and good works performed for his speedy beatification.

There are many striking resemblances and connections between this holy man of God and the late Father Godfrey Schilling. Both were born in Europe, Fr. Frederic in the Flemish part of France and Fr. Godfrey near Baden, Germany. Both became Franciscans and as young men volunteered for missionary work in the Holy Land, where for six years of their service they worked close to each other, Fr. Frederic in Jerusalem and Fr. Godfrey in Nazareth. Both in time came to America to do the major work of their apostolic lives, Fr. Frederic in Canada and Fr. Godfrey in the United States. Both loved souls ardently and gave themselves unsparingly in preaching, writing and hearing confessions. Both had a burning love for St. Francis and everything Franciscan, encouraging vocations and spreading the Third Order among the laity. Above all they worked incessantly for the welfare of

the Holy Land, its Holy Places, and its Missions, transplanting to America by descriptive word and creative replica the Holy Land Shrines associated with Our Lord's life here on earth.

Father Frederic left his native France for the Holy Land in 1876, and remained there until 1888, serving most of his time in Jerusalem as Vicar or Assistant Superior of the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land. He worked incessantly in preaching missions, giving retreats, and guiding pious pilgrims through the Holy Land. He was also a prodigious writer of religious and descriptive articles on the Holy Land, its peoples and customs. He contributed to many Catholic magazines, including The Pilgrim of Palestine (now The Crusader's Almanac). For several years his articles appeared in the same issues with those of Fr. Godfrey Schilling.

In 1888, Fr. Frederic was chosen for a very providential mission, namely, that of bringing back to Canada the Franciscans and of establishing there the first Commissariat of the Holy Land. Fr. Godfrey continued on in the Holy Land for another six years, when he too was given orders to go to America to help with the developing of the Commissariat of the Holy Land in New York City, becoming Commissary in 1896.

Both continued close friends, and frequent correspondence and some visits went on between them. These holy and zealous pioneers laid well the foundations of the work of the Holy Land, as today's flourishing Commissariats in Ottawa, Canada and Washington, D.C., fully demonstrate.

Only death could separate for a few years these two truly great Franciscans. Father Frederic passed to his reward in 1916, and his loyal friend, Father Godfrey, in 1934. Shortly after the death of Fr. Frederic, Fr. Godfrey was one of the first to urge that steps be taken for the beatification of the "Bon Père Frédéric." Thank God, today there are sound reasons to believe that the happy day is not far off when we can truly say: "Blessed Frederic, pray for us!"

Very Rev. Paschal Kinsel, O.F.M.,

Commissary of the Holy Land,

Washington, D.C.

P R E F A C E

Several years ago the Superiors of the Franciscan Province of St. Joseph in Canada assigned to me the task of writing a comprehensive biography of Good Father Frederic.

The late Father Mathieu Marie Daunais, O. F. M., during the many years when he served as first Vice-Postulator of the Cause of Beatification of the Servant of God, had gathered a mass of documentary materials in Canada, Europe, and Palestine. It was thanks to his labors that this biography could be written. I must record here my debt to that tenacious pioneer.

Other zealous collaborators gathered more documents, particularly in the field of official correspondence. Two Canadian Franciscan missionaries in the Holy Land during the 1930s, Father Paul Eugène Trudel and Brother Noël Gosselin, performed a colossal task in assembling materials in Palestine. And the distinguished Franciscan scholar Ephrem Longpré, in addition to his scientific research, was kind enough to examine the diplomatic archives of the French Foreign Ministry for correspondence dealing with Father Frederic's assignment to Palestine and various matters regarding the Holy Land.

I wish hereby to express my gratitude to all who, in one way or another, have contributed their willing cooperation to this work.

A journey to Europe, Palestine, and Egypt which I made in 1950 with Father Onésime Lamontagne, O. F. M., the Vice Postulator at that time, was particularly helpful as it provided, in addition to certain historical data, a personal knowledge of the places in which Father Frederic lived.

The original plan of this book, which was begun by Father Mathieu Marie Daunais, was to present a biography that would be as complete as possible, with full critical apparatus. However, circumstances obliged me to modify that

plan. This work is designed to fill an urgent need on the part of the general reading public. In approach it is therefore midway between a critical and a popular biography. It includes only essential references to the most authentic sources: manuscripts or published works and oral evidence. I interviewed several persons who knew Father Frederic well, notably His Excellency Ange Marie Hiral, O. F. M., second Vicar Apostolic of the Suez Canal Vicariate, who had been in Father Frederic's time Provincial of the Franciscan Order in Canada and Guardian of the Friary in Trois Rivières. Monsignor Hiral came to spend the last years of his life (July 17, 1950-January 18, 1952) in the Friary in Quebec City, in which I had been residing for several years.

The memory of Good Father Frederic is still very vivid in French Canada, and his name is linked to important undertakings, such as the Commissariat of the Holy Land, the Shrine of Our Lady of the Cape, the Reparation near Montreal, and the Way of the Cross at Saint Elie de Caxton. Those who knew him speak of him as a "saint." And at his funeral, Bishop François Xavier Cloutier of Trois Rivières expressed the unanimous conviction of the people of his Diocese when he declared that Father Frederic had died "in the odor of sanctity."

That reputation for holiness, the striking success of his various apostolic projects, the extraordinary throng of faithful at his funeral, and the growing number of favors attributed to the intervention of the Servant of God induced the religious authorities to take the necessary steps to institute a Process of Beatification.

First there was the phase of the Diocesan Processes in Trois Rivières, where Father Frederic spent the greater part of his priestly career and where his remains are buried: the Informative Process (November 10, 1927 — March, 1929); the Process on the Writings, beginning on June 20, 1930, and ending on February 23, 1937, with a pontifical decree of praise; the Process on Non-cult (February 26-March 10, 1931). Similar Processes were conducted in Lille, the diocese of origin

of the Servant of God, and in Egypt and Palestine, where he lived for twelve years.

In 1939 the Process on Non-cult was examined in Rome. In 1940 was issued the decree introducing the Cause into the Sacred Congregation of Rites, and in 1941 the decree which dispensed with the Process dealing with the general reputation for sanctity. The Apostolic Process began in Trois Rivières in June, 1946. On January 13, 1948, Father Frederic's Tomb was opened, and his body was found in a mummified state. In 1948 and 1949 the Apostolic Process dealing with the virtues was held in France and in Palestine. In 1956 the Sacred Congregation of Rites completed the examination of a second group of writings which had not been included in the first Process. In 1958 it gave its approval to the Diocesan and Apostolic Processes. There remains the discussion in the Roman Congregation of the heroicity of virtue. If the decree is favorable, only the investigation of the two miracles required for Beatification will remain. Then the Church will judge whether the glorification of the Servant of God is opportune.

Under the direction of the Postulator General of the Friars Minor residing in Rome, several Canadian Friars have served as Vice-Postulators of Father Frederic's Cause of Beatification. The first and most important was Father Mathieu Marie Daunais, from March, 1926, until his death on September 26, 1944. The most eloquent testimonials to his magnanimous abilities were the success of the first stages of the Cause and the building in 1938 of a Crypt-Museum in honor of Good Father Frederic under the Franciscan Chapel in Trois Rivières. His successors were Fathers Conrad Morin (1945-46), Léopold Boiteau (1946-47), Onésime Lamontagne (1947-54), and Hector Fréchette (since 1954). Father Paul Eugène Trudel made a major contribution in organizing the archives of the Cause, and Father Ludolphe Ayotte, after spending six years in the Holy Land, has served as Guardian of the Crypt-Museum since 1954.

Each year thousands of Canadian and American pilgrims flock to the Crypt, which is conveniently located in Trois Rivières on the main highway between Montreal and Quebec.

In 1958, for instance, 70,000 visitors and 348 groups of pilgrims visited the Crypt-Museum.

Such figures illustrate the vitality of Good Father Frederic's present-day influence among the people of French Canada. This book has no other aim than to make him better known and loved, and to inspire in its readers the desire to imitate him and the thought of praying for his intercession. For as the great French writer Charles Péguy stated, "for us Christians, let us proudly declare, the supernatural and the holy — that is what history is, the only history perhaps that interests us, the only profound and profoundly real history."

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

The author and the publisher of this book join the translator in cordially acknowledging their profound gratitude to Mr. John P. Heffernan, Associate Editor of *The Franciscan Review* of Montreal, for his invaluable contribution in typing the entire manuscript, publishing it serially in that magazine, and correcting the proofs of the book. Their joint prayer is that Good Father Frederic may reward him with many blessings for his able and willing labor.

Readers will note that the translation retains the French spelling of the name Frederic (but without accents) and also, on the advice of Canadians, the French *Trois Rivières* instead of "Three Rivers," to avoid confusion with other towns having that name in Canada and the United States. However, if the book is read aloud in religious communities, the reader is free to substitute "Three Rivers" wherever he finds *Trois Rivières*.

It is my fervent hope that this book will induce more English-speaking Canadians and Americans to visit the edifying and fascinating Crypt-Museum of Good Father Frederic in *Trois Rivières* in the course of their pilgrimages and vacation journeys to the great Shrines of Our Lady of the Cape, Sainte Anne de Beaupré, and St. Joseph's Oratory. In prayer at his Tomb they will have the rare privilege of imbibing some of the seraphic spirit of a modern Francis of Assisi who lived in North America in our times.

This translation is offered as a small token of my intense gratitude to Good Father Frederic for numerous major and minor favors received through his intercession during the past fifteen years.

PART ONE

HIS NATIVE COUNTRY: FRANCE

Chapter 1

MARY'S REALM

The Janssoone family farm extended along the path leading to the flour mill. The houses beside this road known as the *Meulhouck* (mill road) were low: to go in, you had to bend your head, and a man of average height could touch the ceiling of the large central room with his hand. The houses were built in the Flemish style, with very steep roofs covered with concave red tiles made of baked clay, and they had red brick walls, green shutters, and two chimneys topped with brown-stone flues.

Although the Janssoone home resembled all the others, its approaches were different: in front was a small pleasure garden enclosed by a wooden fence. Behind the house were the well with its stone lip and the vegetable garden and chicken coop framed by a thick hawthorn hedge. On the south side was the barn, made of bricks, with a thatched roof.

A little niche in the outer wall sheltered a statue of the Blessed Virgin, the protectress of the home.

The main entrance faced the small village of Ghyvelde, fifteen minutes away along the path.¹ A few yards toward the north on the left, the land's flat surface-line is broken from time to time by the sails of heavily laden barges gliding slowly, almost level with the ground, along the canal, which still extends from Furnes to Dunkerque, parallel to the sea. From the house there is a wide range of visibility: first, close by, two windmills and the church steeple of Ghyvelde, then those of the neighboring parishes: Les Moëres, Hondchoote, Warhem, Uxem, Leffrinckoucke, Zuydcoote, and—in Belgium—Adinkerque and Houthem.²

On each side of the Furnes canal, from "the garland of dunes" along the North Sea to those marking a former shoreline two miles inland, stretched the old village of Ghyvelde in its low-lying lagoon. Located in the north-eastern tip of French Flanders, on the Belgian border, it shared in the basic characteristics of the Flemish countryside: the farming tradition and the centuries-old struggle against the forces of nature—sea, floods, sand-dunes, and swamps. The French historian Jules Michelet aptly wrote: "Flanders has evolved, so to speak, against nature; it represents an achievement of human labor." As a result, its inhabitants were obliged to develop extraordinary resourcefulness and intelligence.

The history of Ghyvelde is linked to the work of draining the swampy Moères, which was begun in 1619 and definitely completed, after several delays, in 1826. The Moères (from the Flemish word *Moor*, *Moer*, meaning swamp) were stretches of muddy and pestilential water, south of Ghyvelde, below sea-level. On this low-lying and monotonous plain covering more than twelve square miles, which had been saved from the floods, lay extensive fertile fields dotted with pretty thatched-roofed farmhouses, crisscrossed by waterways and roads along which grew willow and poplar trees. The first farm buildings and homes were made of wood and rammed earth. By the end of 1802, the Moères had 120 inhabitants and even a mayor, the farmer Jean Boo.

The Flemish people applied their tenacity not only to opposing the floods and conserving their land, but also to repelling other still more threatening attacks against their way of life: they had to fight to preserve their religious faith during three centuries of persecution. They attributed all the credit for their success to their age-old devotion to the Blessed Virgin. Our Lady rewarded their filial love with an admirable protection. The wayside shrines and the churches dedicated to Mary which are found throughout town and country constitute a living proof of this relationship. Flanders became Mary's realm. The protecting shadow of the Blessed Virgin

extended above and beyond that of Ghyvelde's two windmills which, when at rest, raised their frail arms over the long grey fields, as in a gesture of prayer. She was watching over the land of Flanders.

* * *

Pierre Antoine Janssoone was born in the Moëres on April 30, 1796, in an old peasant family whose love of work equalled their devotion to their religion. He had taken a very active part in the draining of the marshes, and had made a good living by his labor. From his parents, Jean François Janssoone and Marie Thérèse Pikaert, he had inherited and faithfully preserved the most precious of all legacies: a religious faith which had issued from the furnace of the French Revolution of 1789 purified and brilliant like a piece of gold. He firmly intended to transmit that legacy to his descendants.

His first wife, Jeanne Rose Sybrandt, whom he married on April 9, 1822, was the widow of Guillaume François Boo and the mother of three children: Virginie, Sophie, and Jean Ignace. We do not know what became of these children who, even if they reached adulthood, played no part in Father Frederic's life. From his first marriage, with Jeanne Rose Sybrandt, Pierre Antoine Janssoone had three children, all of whom died in infancy. There will therefore be no further mention of the Sybrandt-Boo and Sybrandt-Janssoone families in this biography.

As a widower, Pierre Antoine Janssoone took a second wife on November 5, 1828: Marie Isabelle Bollengier, the widow of a doctor and public health official, Jean Baptiste Dumont. Her parents were Pierre Jean Jacques Bollengier and Isabelle Thérèse Vandaele. She was a woman of rare quality, whose father and mother belonged to two of the richest and foremost families of Warhem. Her excellent upbringing added a quiet, charming simplicity and nobility to her deep religious faith, her strong character, and the exquisite delicacy of her soul. Those were the qualities which had attracted the atten-

tion of Dr. Jean Baptiste Dumont. The physician of Warhem had treated her father and saved his life. In a surge of gratitude the prosperous farmer said to the doctor during his convalescence:

"Ask me for whatever you wish!"

"Then let me have your daughter," replied Dr. Dumont with a smile.

In their ten years of married life in Warhem and then in Ghyvelde, the Dumont couple became the parents of five children: Jean Baptiste, Mélanie (died in infancy), Victoire, Sophie, and Rosalie.

Marie Isabelle Bollengier therefore brought four children to her new home, and by her second husband, Pierre Antoine Janssoone, she had eight more, only four of whom lived to adulthood: Pierre, Annette, Henri, and the Servant of God Frederic.³

The subject of this biography was therefore the eighth child of the Janssoone family, but his mother's thirteenth and last child. He was born in Ghyvelde on November 19, 1838. In baptism he received the names Frederic, (as was customary) after his godfather and paternal uncle, Frederic Henri Janssoone, and Cornil, the name of a Saint which Flemish parents formerly gave to nearly all their children. St. Cornil was invoked for protection against nervous illnesses and infants' convulsions. The Flemings used to make pilgrimages to the old church of Quaedypre to pray for the intercession of St. Cornil.

From his native land Frederic acquired and kept to the end of his life a love for work, a calm tenacity of will, an alert, practical, and industrious intelligence, and a perfect and somewhat mysterious discretion, like the sky of Flanders hidden behind the mist. The environment of his childhood gave him the habit of contenting himself with what is necessary and useful, without bothering about superfluous things, and it gave him a firmly based and lasting faith, with great confidence in the Blessed Virgin.

Chapter 2

THE SOUL OF A HOME

(1840-1852)

In the central room of the old Flemish house, the first thing which drew one's attention was a framed black inscription, surrounded by a bouquet of large red and yellow flowers, proclaiming in flaming letters the religious faith of the master of the house: " May Jesus Christ be forever praised! Amen."

God was the real master of the Janssoone's model home. The parents, exercising His delegated authority, gave their children an excellent upbringing. The soul of the home was an intense Christian spirit. Its expression took the form of a thorough moral training which included the example set by the parents, the development of good manners, practice in habits of religion, charity, submission to the will of God, the love of work, and a sane joy in family gatherings. It was sustained by a well-rounded Christian spirituality: group prayers, daily blessing by the father, religious reading for the whole family, teaching of the catechism, and regular reception of the Sacraments.

From his earliest childhood, virtue assumed, in Frederic's eyes, the living form of a father whose honesty was proverbial and a mother whose moral standards and sincere and profound love for God he later exemplified.

Pierre Antoine Janssoone brought to his family a little property, but better yet, the finest natural qualities and patriarchal traditions of his Flemish ancestors, and above all, those truly Christian virtues which create happy families: a strong sense of Christian integrity, an upright judgment, love

of order and work, a family spirit, simple and decent tastes, and a firm religious faith. He was church warden of his parish until he died—and the wardens were selected from the foremost and best men of the village.

Frederic felt a lifelong admiration and gratitude for his mother. Mme. Janssoone was gifted with energy and a sense of the supernatural to an unusual degree. She had offered to the Blessed Virgin the thirteen children of her two marriages, when they were born, and she would have been glad to see all of them later consecrate themselves to the service of God. She never lost even the slightest opportunity to train them in the practice of good manners and virtue. She contributed a moral beauty to their natural good looks: all had handsome eyes, hair, and complexion. She succeeded in giving them an enlightened faith, an iron will, and a trustworthy conscience which kept them on the right path. This rational and religious upbringing penetrated deeply into their souls.

First of all, she taught them self-control and respect for the truth. In her eyes, a person who told a lie deserved contempt. One's word had the value of a notarized document. Only the straight path was to be followed. A person who did not know how to remain silent when necessary merited neither the respect nor the confidence of men. "Fortified castles," she used to say, "always keep their gates closed."

This wise and strong Christian woman taught her children the value of mortification and temperate habits in eating and drinking. Mortification was to be one of the characteristic features of Frederic's life in religion. While performing his duties as a priest, he ate as little as Saint John Mary Vianney, the Curé of Ars. He always said that he had learned this practical lesson from his "good and holy mother," as he used to call her. At meals she would give each child his portion. Knowing their state of health and physical constitution, she gave a portion sufficient to maintain their strength until the next meal. The children had to be satisfied with their just share. Consequently, as Frederic later declared, "my stomach

did not expand under the pressure of too great a volume of food, and that is why I now need little food to satisfy my appetite and preserve my strength. I simply follow what my mother taught me." While this explanation hides his spirit of mortification under the veil of humility, it also testifies to the sound training which he received at home.

Frederic came to understand and appreciate religious devotion when he learned his prayers from his mother and watched her pray. In the parish Mme. Janssoone was considered a model Christian. She loved to go to Ghyvelde's simple, well-lighted, medieval church, whose basilical Romanesque style was an indirect reminder of a former grandeur, despite successive restorations. Attendance at Holy Mass was her favorite religious practice: it was a habit which she insisted on maintaining ever since the years of her first marriage, when she resided nearly opposite the church. On Sundays she also attended the Vespers service. On Thursdays and special occasions, she went to church accompanied by all her children. If she was not feeling well, she rode on a donkey. In a period when, under the influence of Jansenism, even religious persons received Holy Communion only once a year, she received her Lord several times each year. Toward the end of her life her reverent attraction for Mass was so great that it seemed to drag her to church, so to speak. She was often so exhausted on the way that she had to rest at the entrance of one house after another.

Every religious feastday found the Janssoone family kneeling before the altar, and all family anniversaries could only begin and end in church.

Each evening they practised what might be called a family liturgy, based on the Master's promise: "Where two or three are gathered in My Name, I come in the midst of them." After supper and as soon as the dishes had been washed and put back in the sideboard, the entire family kneeled down to pray before the ancient crucifix sculptured in boxwood and placed on a stand of several steps on the mantlepice above the fire-

place. This family cross, which was the center of every Flemish home, remained in the same place from one generation to the next. Usually the mother would lead the evening prayers, to which all the others responded together, but often, according to Flemish custom, it was the youngest child, the most innocent voice, who recited the prayer. We can guess Frederic's recollection and fervor when he performed that holy task. The family never failed to say the rosary, using the method which the Dominican Blessed Alain de la Roche (1428?-1475) had propagated in the fifteenth century and which had given a new impetus to that Marian devotion. This method consisted in interspersing a brief pious reflection or meditation on the Mystery between each Hail Mary.

Frederic, who was destined to lead pilgrimages in Jerusalem and Cap-de-la-Madeleine, never forgot Blessed Alain's method of reciting the Rosary which he had learned in his childhood.

Then, in this home in which parental authority had an almost priestly character, the father's blessing ended the evening prayers. This patriarchal custom was an admirable remnant of medieval faith, for it filled the parents with a consciousness of their responsibility and the children with that respect and love which they owed to God's representatives. Before going to bed, the children went to their father and mother, with clasped hands, and asked for their blessing. The parents then traced a cross on the forehead of each child. Father Frederic retained a moving memory of that gesture of his father's blessing. Msgr. Barnard's book *Le Vieillard* contains a beautiful description of "this sort of sacrament of religion in the home," which was practised in the coastal part of Flanders as well as in the farming districts.

During the long winter evenings, the family often spoke of past events, such as the terrifying adventures during the French Revolution and the evacuation of Ghyvelde and its inhabitants in 1793. The subjects which they enjoyed most of all were the more or less miraculous stories derived from that

collection which is aptly entitled *The Golden Legend*. The accounts of the lives of the saints in that old book, which perhaps more than any other imprinted its stamp on mediæval Christendom, had attained widespread popularity among the masses of the people. Its fascination and charm, based on a naive spirit of love and poetry, edified and delighted whole generations.

Father Frederic later narrated with charming simplicity a true story from what might be called his *Golden Legend*. After the death of his brother Pierre as a missionary in India, he related this incident which occurred in 1840: "Our very devout mother used to give us talks about religion. One morning, after a talk on the lives of the Fathers of the Desert, Pierre, the oldest of the four children born of the second marriage, said to his little sister Annette, aged six: 'Come on, let's be hermits too!' He was eight years old. Annette took the hand of her little brother Henri, aged two and a half. And the latter took the hand of his tiny brother Frederic who is writing these notes, and who was one and a half year old. All four of us went and stood motionless, with hands folded in prayer, behind the barn, around a haystack, each in his own hermitage. And we stayed there until lunch time, when with some difficulty we were found contemplating in our desert! It was amid such thoughts that we spent our childhood."¹

A similar incident is to be found in the life of the great Flemish leprosy apostle, Father Damien, occurring during the same years. His mother liked to read to her children the lives of the saints and martyrs and Fathers of the Desert. At the age of four, Joseph de Veuster (the future Father Damien), with his brother (aged ten), his sister (twelve), and a cousin (ten), spent an entire day imitating the anchorites, remaining alone in silence, praying on their knees and eating their lunch in silence. Father Damien's biographer considers this incident "obvious evidence of a rare generosity which had a spontaneous relation to his developing attraction for virtue, no matter what it might cost him."

Frederic was never to forget the mental image which he received in his childhood of the Fathers of the Desert; later he became one of their most faithful disciples. He often spoke of that first knowledge of their lives as an event which had a decisive influence on his future life. If prudence prevents us from attributing too much significance to a childhood amusement, it nevertheless permits us to discern in it a very favorable omen. A divine seed was thereby sown in the chosen soil of this child's soul. The planting was done by the mother by means of family reading.

Religious reading in the family was one of the important wellsprings of the spirituality of Catholic families in France and in Canada in former times. In old Flanders, a book entitled *Vaastenboekje* (Lenten Book) was read every day in Lent by most families.

Another incident of Frederic's childhood is known to us: his first sermon—the first of several which he preached to his brothers and sisters. This episode reveals the personal and sincere way in which the idea of religion found utterance on his young lips and the two-fold influence exercised on him by the parish and his family. Standing on a pile of hay like the priest in the pulpit, he preached in Flemish to his Dumont-Janssoone brothers and sisters. With a courage that matched his religious fervor, he delivered in his own way the priest's sermons and his mother's lessons. He spoke frankly about God. It is a pity that this youthful preacher never mentioned later the spiritual effect of this first sermon, which he ended, as was customary, with a paternal solemn blessing, "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen."

The people of Flanders honored work as highly as prayer. Frederic found in his parents living examples of a love of work and orderliness, just as they were model Christians.

His mother would begin her labors of devotion and love before dawn. All day long she worked for her household, treating the children of her two successive husbands with an

admirable evenness of temper and with absolute impartiality. As a true Fleming, she insisted on the home being perfectly clean. To her daily tasks of housekeeping, gardening, and caring for the chickens, she added the more skilled labor of spinning and weaving. All the linen was made at home. Every Flemish house had at least one loom, while some even had two or three. In one large cupboard and chest-of-drawers with its curved outlines, located at the back of the common living-room, the mother carefully laid away the family's clothes and arranged her high stacks of fine Flanders linen, scented with lavender and wild thyme.

As a good little Flemish boy, with a love for work and a desire to imitate the Child of Nazareth, young Frederic took pleasure in helping his parents. He eagerly performed his small share of the daily chores in the house or fields.

Soon he was ready to go to the village school. In his home he had acquired, for the struggle of existence, two loves which were to be lifelong and were to form the keystone of the vault of his amazingly fruitful life: *a love of prayer* and *a love of work*. *Non recuso laborem*: "I do not refuse work," he often liked to say during his later busy apostolate as a missionary. And God blessed His servant's human labors with splendid fruit, for he was wholly devoted to the glory of God. Frederic humbly put into practice from his schooldays—and never in his life did he forget—the lesson which was taught him by his Christian mother, who used to say to her children these brief and stimulating words: "Always remember, my dear children, that the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. I want you to apply yourselves to your studies—and that, in the service of God, your only occupation be work and prayer."

Even in grade school, Frederic gave proof of an alert mind and steady zeal. At the end of the school year, he brought home, joyfully and triumphantly, the first prizes of his class.

His family's way of life taught him how to achieve a harmonious combination of both the austere and the pleasant vir-

tues. For while the atmosphere of the Janssoone home imposed a sense of respect, it was also imbued with joy.

There was not a more hospitable house in Ghyvelde. Strangers and paupers found a good meal and lodging there. Distant or nearby relatives were welcomed with cordial joy. It was a true Flemish home, where everyone was made welcome without ceremony and served a piece of pastry, a glass of the delicious blond Flemish beer, and then a cup of coffee. A sane gaiety permeated such gatherings which tightened the bonds among the members of Flemish families. These meetings included days passed in common recreation, delightful and intimate evenings spent by parents and children together, endless dinners on winter Sundays, witty Flemish stories with untranslatable puns, and popular songs. The latter often express better than historical documents the character of this people that has always been deeply religious and at times somewhat mocking and satirical, yet never in the least melancholic, and which, despite a certain coldness of approach, has always willingly manifested that frank and sound gaiety—occasionally a bit vulgar—which is to be observed at its fairs and parties.

Toward the end of his life, Father Frederic wept with happiness when recalling these beautiful family gatherings. Never did he find elsewhere festivities that were more wholesome, profound, and sincere. The memory of those pure joys of his childhood seemed to inject new vigor into his heart in his old age.

Frederic would have been an exception to the tradition of great souls in the school of divine Providence if, even in his childhood, he had not known the Cross, on which he was throughout his life to lie and to offer himself as a victim soul.

His father was stricken with cancer of the stomach, and during the violent attacks of that implacable illness, had to stop his work on the farm. Medical science and the affectionate care of his family were helpless to stop the progress of the sickness.

He prepared for his passing into eternity with all the faith of a truly religious man, by means of profound feelings of humble compunction and by fervent reception of the Sacraments of Penance, Holy Eucharist, and Extreme Unction, which to a certain degree, even before the judgment of God, brought to his confident soul the eternal Keys of divine mercy. The dying man strongly recommended faithfulness in serving God and fear of displeasing Him to the members of his family who were assembled at his bedside—only Pierre was absent, being at the high school in Hazebrouck. For the last time before losing consciousness, the father gave his blessing to his children, as he used to do every evening. As a farewell he left them these simple words imbued with Christian faith and hope: "May the good God keep you! Goodbye, until we meet again in Heaven. . ." He died at 8 p.m. on January 13, 1848, aged fifty-one. Frederic was not yet ten years old.

That year 1848 was to bring dire suffering to the boy both as a son and as a citizen of France. His father's death was soon followed by the Revolution of February, 1848, in which the republican middle-classes and the socialist labor forces overthrew King Louis Philippe. A famine followed the revolution.

Later in his life, Father Frederic wrote about the sufferings of the ordinary people, which included himself, rather than about the political struggle on a higher level:

A severe famine struck our beloved land, which had already been so deeply convulsed by the revolution. Groups of starving men numbering several hundred came from a neighboring country (Belgium), which had suffered even more than ours, and invaded our northern provinces. Other needy men, who wore masks and were called *les Pauvres Honteux* (the Ashamed Poor), attacked the homes of our peace-loving farmers after nightfall, and demanded with threats what they needed to live on. Blood flowed in fights for bread in front of bakeries. The regular army was no longer able to maintain or to guarantee security in the large towns. The heads of families were called to serve in the *Garde Nationale*. A sinister sense of fear and uncertainty hovered over all France.²

Amid the sufferings of those years, Mme. Janssoone played the role of a Sister of Charity by visiting the poor and consoling the afflicted. To the needy she gave clothes, food, medicine and encouraging words. Because she gave up everything for her children, the Janssoone family was not considered rich. Nevertheless their farm was known to all the poor. They were sure of finding there something to eat and drink and a lodging for the night. It even happened, as in the stable of Bethlehem, that a baby was born there one night.

Frederic occasionally accompanied his mother on her errands of charity, and the inspiring memory of those visits to the poor made a lifelong impression on the depths of his soul. With obvious emotion he used to describe instances of his mother's charity work and the Christian training in virtue which she gave her children, for example, by letting them give a coin to a beggar with their own hands in order that they might thus have the merit of their good deeds. Their humble home was a real school of charity. Often all the bread which had been baked in the morning was given away by the evening of the same day !

His mother's tireless generosity planted in the soul of little Frederic the seeds of that love for the poor and the afflicted which was later to become a sublime passion in him. Quite unconsciously he was already following in the footsteps of the *Poverello* of Assisi, the lover of the poor, his future spiritual Father, without yet knowing that St. Francis had made the love of poverty a means to achieve perfection. Happy is the mother who is able to generate the spirit of heroism in the heart of her children.

When Frederic reached his thirteenth birthday—the age required then for the reception of First Holy Communion in the Diocese of Cambrai, in which Ghyvelde was situated—his mother gave him a careful preparation for that great milestone in life. She was the first catechism teacher of her own children. The village pastor gave a more systematic course of lessons in religion to the first communicants in the church. The

book in use, *Le Catéchisme de Cambrai*, with the French and Flemish text on opposite pages, provided specific examples taken from the Old and New Testaments and the history of the Church, which the priest and the mother used as demonstrations of the truths which they taught.

On Passion Sunday morning, March 28, 1852, Ghyvelde's ancient church was filled with a motley crowd: peasant women with starched white headdresses, large embroidered shawls, and long dresses closed at the neck, rubbed elbows with substantial farmers or simple sailors dressed in their Sunday best. It was a great day. Young Frederic was one of the group of white-clothed first communicants. This first reception of God in the Eucharist in his pure and sincere soul must have been like a radiant and fresh interior sunrise that was to illumine the whole course of his life.³

On the day before this solemn ceremony, Frederic had gone to church for confession. Upon returning home, he knelt in front of his mother, in accordance with the Flemish custom of those times, to ask her pardon for all offenses committed against her and to request her blessing.

Throughout his long life he had a special veneration for his mother. In Canada he used to speak about her virtues and piety with such enthusiasm and awe that several priests suspected him of vanity, whereas his only motive was to edify his listeners.

The Janssoone home life, therefore, was based on a thorough moral and religious training. Cardinal Mercier took pleasure in emphasizing that St. Thérèse of Lisieux was the fruit of a double lineage of outstanding Christians. "Ah!" he exclaimed, "how happy I am to know that she was the reward of a model family. We must not tire of repeating this everywhere." Likewise, we must not tire of repeating that Frederic, too, was "the reward of a model family."

Chapter 3

BLOW AFTER BLOW

(1852-1856)

At the end of his thirteenth year Frederic had finished his primary courses at the Ghyvelde village school. He asked his mother for the privilege of going to high school. For some time a great plan had been directing his heart toward God: when he was a year and a half old he had been found praying in a "grotto" dug into a haystack; as a boy he liked to climb onto bales of corn and to preach to his brothers and sisters. In a word, his love "for the things of God and the service of the holy altar" inclined him toward the priesthood.

The time seemed to be favorable for the fulfilment of this desire. His brother Pierre had just graduated from the high school at Hazebrouck and was beginning the philosophy course at the major seminary of Cambrai. When she saw her oldest son wearing a cassock, Mme. Janssoone was convinced that her most fervent prayers had been granted. It was indeed a great joy and honor for her family to have a priest. One of her granddaughters, Mme. Clodérée Deswarte, has written, "my grandmother wanted only one thing from God: to see her son become a priest and to live in his rectory, close to the church in a village; then she would take thought concerning her daughters' future." Now it seemed that the fulfilment of this devout ambition was to radiate its warm light over her declining years. Just then, moreover, her youngest son also expressed the desire to become a priest! She certainly could not hesitate a moment to take additional sacrifices upon herself

in order to obtain for him the advantage of a superior education and thus to ensure the blossoming of his evident vocation to the priesthood. Her maternal intuition had perceived his aptitude for the calling.

Mme. Janssoone therefore sent Frederic to the municipal high school of Hazebrouck, from which Pierre had recently graduated.

This school, which is today the minor seminary of St. Francis of Assisi, was a secondary high school under the control of the University of Douai. With the advantages of a general education, it offered the special assurance of a Christian training. Consequently it was the logical center for vocations to the clergy in that part of the *Département du Nord* which extends toward Dunkerque. It was more fortunate than most French high schools, which, since the French Revolution, had been invaded by religious indifference, for it had as its director a priest who was eminent for his knowledge and virtue: the Abbé Jacques Dehaene (1809-1882), who has rightly been called "the apostle of education in Flanders." His powerful and inspiring personality made its mark on all the institutions of the *Département du Nord* during the 19th century.

Under the guidance of this enlightened educator and protector of priestly and religious vocations, young Frederic was in no danger of having his mind distorted by the so-called neutral system of education which was dominant in France after the Revolution of 1789. On the contrary, he continued to receive the firm Christian training which his parents had inaugurated in their home.

He began his course at the Hazebrouck high school on October 8, 1852. From the very first days he showed himself a serious student. The joyful and virile serenity of his features, which reflected the purity of his soul, quickly won for him the friendship of his fellow students and the esteem of his teachers.

Even then he had that inflexible honest heart, open intelligence, and good will which later made him so much loved by our Canadian people.

He entered the eighth class, under M. Edouard Scheercousse, a layman for whom teaching was not a chore but an apostolate. His courses were therefore highly appreciated by his students.

Frederic was able to profit from the experience and devotion of this excellent teacher, and he showed an energy that never flagged before difficulties. At the end of the schoolyear he won first prizes in Latin grammar, arithmetic and memory, without counting accessory prizes for writing, spelling and analysis.

In 1853, as a result of his success in the preceding year, Frederic passed right from the eighth to the sixth class. This privilege of "skipping" a class was a sign of outstanding aptitude. His new teacher, M. Lefebvre, was, like the former, a man of distinction and complete devotion to his work.

A student of average ability could obtain a successful rating from such a teacher. The more gifted boys had to work very hard in order to compete with their rivals for the glory of being included in the honors list. Frederic had precisely that kind of steady zeal. Consequently, he attained a rank that was still higher than the preceding year's, despite the fact that he had "skipped" a whole year's course. He was awarded first prizes in Latin composition and memory, second in Greek grammar, first accessory prize for Latin translation, and second for "excellence" (a general rating for all composition work). He also won accessory prizes in spelling, analysis and arithmetic, showing that he did not neglect any of his courses.

During these two years Frederic gave the convincing impression of a model student. His attitude toward his teachers was imbued with that refined and sincere courtesy which he had acquired at home from his mother and which was to remain throughout his life one of the elements of his personality and was to be one of the sources of his charm as guide of pilgrims in the Holy Land and at the Shrine of Our Lady of the Cape. It would indeed be difficult to estimate how popular it made him. He already realized that courtesy is in little things,

as it were, a miniature replica of what the love of our neighbor is in great things; that it is ever and everywhere an advantage, that it costs nothing, and that with it all things can be purchased. As King Henry IV of France used to say:

"Parole douce et main au bonnet

Ne coute rien et bon est."

"A good word and a tip of the hat

Cost nothing and do good."

A former fellow student of Frederic, Canon Deman, later pastor of Bergues, recalled with pleasure the years which he spent in the latter's company; he was the only witness of those school times whom Father Mathieu Daunais, O.F.M., was able to meet. While Father Mathieu and the Abbé Delanghe, Pastor of Ghyvelde, were taking a meal as guests of Canon Deman, the latter told them: "His devotion to God was enlightened and sincere. Toward his superiors his respect was absolute and his submission without reserve. He was always noticeable for his fidelity in school discipline, for he wished to be the best of all the boys, without however seeking to appear so."

In case this testimonial given fifty years later is not sufficient, let us turn to the irrefutable evidence of his teachers and fellow students as recorded in the list of awards for 1853-54: by vote of the pupils, of the fourth, fifth and sixth classes, approved by the teachers, Frederic, while in the sixth class, was given the prize for good behavior and zeal. Usually this prize was awarded to the students of the highest class (in this case the fourth), rarely to one of a lower class, and only very exceptionally to one in the youngest group. This vote proves that Frederic was admired by his companions even when he was in the sixth class.

In the autumn of 1854, instead of going back to the Hazebrouck high school, Frederic entered the *Institut Notre Dame des Dunes* in Dunkerque. This school had been founded barely four years earlier by the Abbé Dehaene, the headmaster of the Hazebrouck high school, in order to take immediate advan-

tage of the famous Falloux law on freedom of primary and secondary education, which deprived the University of Cambrai of its regional teaching monopoly.

Frederic began in the fifth class at the *Institut Notre Dame des Dunes* as a semi-boarder. He took his meals with his nephew Charles in the home of his half-brother Jean Baptiste Dumont.

Again, according to his teachers and companions, Frederic was a model student who obeyed not from fear, not merely "in the teacher's sight," but by a sense of duty and love of virtue, in God's sight. He used his youth as a period of self-training. And daily contact with about a hundred boys of different characters gave him many suitable opportunities.

Besides, far from suffering the slightest decrease as a result of his studies, his interest in religion grew from day to day under the influence of grace and the spiritual guidance which he received.

Again Frederic began to win first prizes. In fact his success was greater than at the Hazebrouck school. At the formal awarding of prizes on August 10, 1855, he received first prizes for excellence, Latin translation and composition, Greek translation, French arithmetic, daily work; second prizes for memory and religious instruction; and second accessory prizes for history and geography. Moreover, he was also awarded, by vote of teachers and students, the prize for good conduct. In other words, his success was striking, rich in promise for the future, and apparently a sure guarantee against misfortune.

On October 8, 1855, Frederic returned to the *Institut Notre Dame des Dunes* in high spirits and high hopes for the future.¹ He set to work at once with his usual zeal. He found inspiration in the example of his teacher, M. Leissius, who was preparing to enter the University and was destined later to fill several important positions there.

Frederic felt morally certain that God was calling him to the priesthood. He wanted to be a priest — and a holy priest.

He wanted to collaborate closely with God in the salvation of immortal souls through preaching and the administration of the Sacraments.

But during the course of this year in the fourth class, a terrible trial fell, like an overnight frost, on his ambition to be a priest which was ripening in his youthful heart. All of a sudden, he had to leave the school without even receiving the rewards earned by his hard work.

His family, which had been well off, had seen its income decrease bit by bit. After her husband's death, due to her poor health, Mme. Janssoone had not been able to take care of the farm and was obliged to sell her real estate. Some investments which had seemed likely to be profitable turned out to be disastrous, especially those involving a transportation company named *Guillaume-Luxembourg*. Its business did not develop according to expectations, and it lacked the capital necessary to survive. Meanwhile the Janssoone family funds were frozen. First they thought that it was merely a passing crisis. "Soon the shares must regain their former value," they tried to encourage one another. Instead, the company failed.

When an accounting of these transactions was made, on April 9, 1858, two years after Frederic left school, Mme Janssoone had only 38 francs and 4 centimes left. It is true that she had no debts — but also no income.

This state of affairs became still worse. And the oldest brother, Pierre, turned to Frederic, who had more business ability than he, for help in this unfortunate financial problem, as is evident in the following letter, which he wrote on May 1, 1860, to his brother Henri and to his half-sister and godmother Victoire: "We have made inquiries about the *Guillaume-Luxembourg*. There is agreement that it is a rotten deal. In a certain sense it is beyond the law. In order to make up the value of the twenty shares, 10,000 francs would be required. Where could we find that amount? Nevertheless the company might perhaps have the right to insist that it be paid. That is what we fear. . . You say, 'We run no risk in letting the sale

go through.' I am convinced of just the contrary. If you do not want the shares to be sold at any price, I ask you to take over responsibility for them. Please reply by return mail to Frederic, c/o M. Domarle Quintrel in Estaires. I have already told you that the trusteeship of Mother's property is a burden for me. And I wish to be released from this responsibility. Frederic expects to receive any day a letter from that gentleman, who is in Paris, and who will have to have a definitive answer. . . You can clearly see that we cannot keep these shares. We haven't money enough to make up the value of even a single one of them."

Mme. Janssoone found herself reduced to a state of need bordering on indigence. After Frederic became a Franciscan Friar, he compared her to St. Elisabeth of Hungary who, after having lived in ease, practised virtue to a heroic degree among the poor. His mother, though grieving deeply in her soul and exhausted by her financial troubles, remained first and foremost a true Christian: she wept in silence and offered her suffering heart to the inscrutable designs of God. The first help which she received in her poverty came from her daughter Annette, who had become Sister Marie des Anges of the Augustinian nuns in Arras, and who obtained permission to serve as her mother's nurse for a while.

Mme. Janssoone's poverty obliged Frederic, her youngest child, to leave high school. If her need had not been so extreme, the Abbé Dehaene, who helped so many young seminarians, would no doubt have been able to contribute part of the cost of Frederic's education. But the latter had to seek employment in order to support his mother and his family.

Trouble never comes alone, the saying goes. Another trial which occurred at this time was still more cruel to Mme. Janssoone's motherly heart. Her son Pierre, who was studying for the priesthood, was continuously suffering from an over-scrupulous conscience and decided to leave the major seminary of Cambrai and return to life in the world. For some time a sort of nervous depression took away his courage and made him feel that all responsibility was a burden.

It was a source of anxiety to Mme. Janssoone to see her two sons take up life in the world again. Without hiding her fears, she wept in their presence at the thought of the dangers to which they would be exposed in a new environment where even the most convinced Christians do not always struggle without peril. She offered her children advice, developed their consciences, and gave them little sermons on the dangers of the world and the natural illusions of youth. But the most powerful factor which she used to keep them from evil and to incite them to good was the presence of God. Later, Father Frederic used to say of her, "our mother raised us in the fear of the Lord." She herself gave them the example of a sincere faith by offering her suffering heart to God as He manifested His will through the events of their lives. In her opinion, to educate meant first of all to set an example; to raise others meant to raise oneself. She strove to make her children share these attitudes by repeating with a wholly supernatural simplicity the words of Job: "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord! Go, my dear children, and may God protect you from all evil and keep you in His holy love!"

While he admired his good mother's convictions, nevertheless Frederic could not entirely hide his suffering at leaving school and interrupting his studies, thus apparently compromising his vocation. His features became sad. The trial was hard, very hard. But as he was trained to look upon everything in the light of religion, he did not hesitate to see in this trial the will of God; is not the Lord free to act as He wishes?

Chapter 4

THE UPS AND DOWNS OF A VOCATION

(1856-1864)

To begin his new life, seventeen-year-old Frederic Janssoone certainly had no money. All he had was the fine qualities which he had inherited, the virtues which he had learned from his mother, and the resources of his soul. They were to ensure his success.

He went to join his brother Pierre, who had just found a small position for him at Estaires [pronounced Aytare], a little town in the district of Merville and the *arrondissement* of Hazebrouck. This was about 1856. Pierre was to remain there until 1860.

The two brothers once more took up their life together, living in the same house. They helped each other to accept the defeat of their great dream of becoming priests. What did the future have in store for them now?

In order to describe bit by bit the destiny with which was woven the days of their youth — the least known period of their lives — a biographer can present only a probable sequence of facts.

Pierre had passed through a rather long phase of moral depression. However, it vanished all of a sudden as though by a miracle. He had been ill and painfully confined to his room, when one morning, on the Feast of St. Mary Magdalen, he arose, went to church and confession, and received Communion — and he was cured. Nevertheless, his great trial had

left him exhausted, and his Superiors decided that it would not be wise for him immediately to continue his theology course.

Although temporarily unable to return to the seminary, he was available for military service. In order to avoid that dilemma, he had signed a ten-year contract with the University of Douai.

As for Frederic, he took a job in a commercial firm. For Estaires, which is located on the left bank of the Lys River, had for centuries been a well-known center of the linen business.

His beginnings as an apprentice were very humble. He earned only just what he needed to live on, first in the service of Mr. Demarle Quintrelle (1821-1880), a textile industrialist, and then of the Albert Ledieu Company.

Frederic became a good friend of the Ledieus. They were an excellent and very Catholic family that had come to Estaires from Arras early in the 19th century. The father, Albert Ledieu, had founded a wholesale linen company on the main square. He died in 1849, aged only forty-five, and left his wife, Amélie Hadon, with five daughters and one son.¹

A brother-in-law, Mr. Sylvie Ledieu, came to reside with her and to manage the business until the children were old enough to do so themselves.

At first Frederic was a mere errand boy. But he became a traveling salesman and showed real ability as a businessman.

He had all the qualities required for his new career: integrity, zeal, likableness, and a cautious daring. As a good Fleming, he quickly grasped the advantages of a business deal, but he was in no hurry to conclude it. He did not do things in a rush. In the end he reached his goal without having attracted more attention than necessary.

He took care to be well groomed. He was a handsome young man with curly reddish-brown hair, blue eyes, and a well-clipped beard. He wore neat clothes, perfectly shined

shoes, and a high hat, and carried a cane. He dressed fashionably, as his social position required.

Toward the end of his life, he used to make fun of his little foibles as a traveling salesman and to reproach himself for having been vain. He said that he had been a "little dandy" with his hair parted in the middle and his cane in his hand. Thus he pointed out the great sins of his youth. And while taking pleasure in humiliating himself for these youthful faults committed when living in the world, he preferred to practise throughout his life that virtue which is the opposite of vanity.

The duties of a traveling salesman obliged Frederic to struggle against his natural timidity and to develop the ability to be at ease and welcome customers with a smile. He also found opportunities to exercise self-control in his contacts with the Ledieu family, who were lively and irascible by nature. In his youth he too had a rather lively character, but by dint of practising patience and good will he succeeded in acquiring a heroic gentleness, as we shall see later when considering the pilgrimages which he organized.

His employers noticed his valuable talent for business, and they soon showed their confidence in him by successive, rapid promotions. Frederic became a capable and popular traveling salesman. With his collection of interesting anecdotes and his untiring enthusiasm, he had the gift of persuasion. He would go around the country in a carriage and visit farmers with whom he negotiated the purchase of home-made linens, for this was a time when home crafts were flourishing.

His ability enabled him to earn substantial rewards and thus to give his widowed mother a more adequate support in her need and illness. No doubt the children of her first marriage, the Dumonts and the Deswartes, who were well off, also contributed their share to her income. After having spent some time in Arras with her daughter who was a nun, Soeur Marie des Anges, Mme. Janssoone, in the autumn of 1860, accepted the hospitality of one of her sons, Jean Baptiste Dumont, in Dunkerque.

Pierre had to leave Estaires in 1860 to take over the sixth class in his beloved Hazebrouck High School, under his former headmaster, Canon Dehaene. Teacher and headmaster soon became intimate friends. Although the Abbé Dehaene had founded the Notre-Dame-des-Dunes school in Dunkerque, he continued to reside in Hazebrouck.

Pierre had a special talent for literature. One fine morning he asked for leave, and returned with his degree as *licencié ès lettres*, to the great surprise of his colleagues, who didn't know that he had been preparing for it. At the beginning of the 1861-62 school year, he was assigned to the second class.

In 1860-61, Frederic was informed by a friend that Pierre was going to marry a rich young lady of his own age who was an only daughter, very devout, and well-gifted by nature and grace. Later Frederic said, "I hardly knew her, but I know that she 'wept like a Magdalen' when she heard my brother's final decision." Actually, Pierre was not planning marriage at all, but a charming friend was planning it for him and arranged an interview with the lady. Pierre prepared himself materially and spiritually; he neglected nothing on either the human or the supernatural plane. He set out, perfectly groomed, grasping a brand new umbrella and murmuring a very strange prayer to God: "Let me forget to mention marriage if it is Your will that I consecrate myself to Your service." At the meeting, after the usual formalities, the conversation turned to literature: prose writers and poets were discussed. But not a word was said about the burning question of marriage. When Pierre reached home, he sent off a note excusing himself. As a souvenir of the occasion he kept his umbrella and later took it to India with him. The young lady also gave up the idea of marriage, and she continued to correspond with the missionary. When he returned to France in 1893, he gaily remarked that — after thirty years — he was going to visit her again.

Did Frederic also have a similar idyllic experience? Did his employer think of making him a partner, not only by turn-

ing over to him the management of the company, which was flourishing, but also of uniting him to the family by marriage? Did he favor Frederic's marrying Esther Ledieu, the oldest daughter? Several persons have believed that such was the case. And it is not improbable.

However that may be, Frederic's future was rich in prospects in many ways. His career seemed assured, and its progress guaranteed. Why should he desire another?

Providence answered that question through circumstances. On May 5, 1861, his mother died at the age of sixty-four in Dunkerque, at the home of her son, Jean Baptiste Dumont, who was eventually to become one of the eminent attorneys of the city. Frederic later stated, "I was not present at her death or at her burial. Pierre wrote me a splendid letter, which I greatly regret I did not keep. He summed up the life of that holy woman: 'Our mother died in the odour of sanctity.'"

His mother's death had a decisive influence on the development of Frederic's life: it liberated him from the obligation of supporting her by his work. Henceforth he could give free play to his desire for the priesthood, which was returning more strongly than ever. He believed that his good mother was still continuing in heaven her mission of special care for her children. It is surely not exaggerated to see a close connection between the prayers and sufferings of a mother, on the one hand, and the religious vocations of three of her children, on the other: in 1857 her daughter Annette had been professed with the Augustinian Sisters of Arras, receiving the name of Soeur Marie des Anges; Pierre and Frederic were soon to accept once and for all the call of God.

We are unable to specify the exact time when Frederic felt that call. It is a fact that, after his mother's death, he became more and more thoughtful in the midst of his worldly success, like Francis of Assisi during the successive stages of his conversion. He sometimes wondered whether the ideas which had been haunting him for some time and which were quite alien to his work as a traveling salesman, were indeed

inspirations from heaven or a product of his over-enthusiastic imagination. Actually, God's grace was at work in his heart, slowly and gradually influencing his soul by a variety of thoughts and feelings.

The young man consulted his spiritual director, the Abbé Charles Buzin, who had been appointed vicar of Estaires two days after his ordination on December 17, 1853. He served there until 1864. He was a zealous confessor who used to go to the confessional at five-thirty in the morning. He recruited many priestly and religious vocations, participated in all the international Eucharistic Congresses, advocated frequent and even daily Communion and founded one of the first Catholic youth groups in France, that of St. Louis in Estaires.²

Frederic met the Abbé Buzin not only in the confessional but also at the Sunday meeting of the parish association, the *Société Saint Joseph*, which was founded in 1840 by Alidor Taffin, one of the foremost citizens and greatest benefactors of the town of Estaires, who was the president of the local conference of the St. Vincent de Paul Society. The St. Joseph Society was a kind of parish social club directed by the vicar. Each Sunday its meetings were attended by men and boys of the lower and the middle classes; it provided wholesome recreation and entertainment for them, for they organized various parlor games and also presented plays. This club did a great deal of good, because it fused the different social classes together. Besides his professional circle, Frederic made friends and acquaintances in this highly moral group.

The young traveling salesman also consulted his pastor, Canon Ducroquet. The priest urged his parishioner to make the sacrifices that the call of God required, and he skillfully pointed out the moral dangers involved in business deals which the world calls "profitable." Canon Ducroquet was not the kind of man who favors compromises or half-measures. He was strict about business matters. Some of Father Frederic's brethren recall a moral question which the Friar often asked theologians:

"What is the profit that a businessman may make?"

"Aha," a friend once teased him, "your conscience is reproaching you!"

And Father Frederic smiled.

Quid hoc ad aeternitatem? Of what good is this for eternity? Frederic could not drive out of his mind this thought which his spiritual director had discussed with him. He began to analyze his life *sub specie aeternitatis*, in the light of the soul's eternal destiny.

In the end, he agreed with his advisor. Both were convinced that his vocation was certain. The only question that remained then was to select a religious order. But which one?

Frederic had made his decision. Now he planned to make a retreat and seek the light which he still needed in order to solve his problem and see perfectly clearly what the will of God was regarding his future.

No doubt he turned to his brother-in-law, Jean Warlop-Dumont, for information. The latter, who had been a Trappist, suggested a splendid place for a retreat, where he was acquainted with the religious and the regulations.

One spring day, probably in 1862, Frederic went from Estaires through Hazebrouck toward one of Flanders's rare hills — one on which the Holy Spirit breathes. He walked along the road which was bordered by hop plants, with their long poles at regular intervals supporting horizontal and vertical wires around which the climbing shoots twine. Then he climbed up the hill to the Trappist Monastery of *Le Mont des Cats*, that has been called "the inspired hill of Flanders," where the silent and recollected prayer of monks has arisen for four hundred years, beginning in the 17th century with the hermit sons of St. Anthony and then continuing for the last century with the Trappists, whose monastery of *Sainte Marie du Mont* was founded on the hilltop in 1826 by the painter Ruysen of Hazebrouck.

Although this solitary hill is only about five hundred feet high, it stands out very strikingly from the monotonous Flemish plain, and its summit offers a very fine and extended view. In all directions the horizon opens out like an immense book unfolding in its illustrated pages all the shades of spring-time greenery of trees and fields. In the distance, near the dim horizon which the light haze of Flanders softens, the arms of windmills turn slowly, and steeples — squat 16th century and slender 18th century steeples — give a spiritual punctuation to the diminishing expanse of hamlets and indeterminate fields that stretch toward the North Sea.

Frederic came in search of that solitude which is promised by the inscription over the monastery gate: "*Ecce elongavi fugiens atque mansi in solitudine*. . . I have gone far off, flying away, and I abode in the wilderness" (Ps. 54: 8).

On this hill which saw men ascend in the spirit as well as on foot, Frederic was able to make his retreat, and to study the Rule of St. Benedict and to understand the way of life of the Trappist monks who unite action and contemplation, work and prayer, the harsh savor of penance and the radiant power of liturgical worship. In fact, in selecting the Trappist monastery for his retreat, he had thought that he was called to share that life of prayer and austerity which was in harmony with the secret longing of his heart ever since the days of his childhood, when he loved to hear the golden legends of the way of life of the Fathers of the Desert. Besides, he believed that it also conformed to his intellectual capacity, for on account of his interrupted schooling, he felt that he was called to save souls more by prayer and penance than by preaching.

At the end of the retreat Frederic was able to have a brief interview with the Very Reverend Father Abbot. Dom Dominique Lacaes had at that time been governing the monastery for about fifteen years. As a saintly ascetic he was both the model and the guide of all his religious. With his strong intellect, unshakable will, and iron character, he was the perfect type of the ascetical monk to whom the Rule is a way of life.

With God's permission, the Father Abbot did not seem to take Frederic's inquiries seriously. He thought that he was dealing with a mere tourist without a definite goal, whose questions were motivated by idle curiosity. To him the young man appeared too frail to endure the severity of the Cistercian Rule. This rather unfavorable impression may have been due in part to the fashionable traveling salesman's apparel which Frederic was wearing. He had arrived at the monastery dressed as a young dandy, spick and span, with a cane in his hand. He did not look like a devotee of penance. As he later admitted, he was firmly but politely dismissed.

In his old age he sometimes referred to his "Trappist vocation," as he called it, smiling discreetly in his white beard. However, he always retained for that Order an intense gratitude and respect which he took pleasure in manifesting on several occasions, particularly during the foundation of the Trappistine Nuns at Saint Romuald near Quebec.

He continued to live his devout and wholesome life. His youth was not affected by the whirlwinds of passion. If indeed he experienced or had a passing glimpse of them, at least he was able to master them. One of his acquaintances at Estaires said that "his features reflected peace and gentleness." One day after becoming a religious he unwittingly revealed how pure his morals had been in his youth. During a conversation on the strictness of the Jansenists, he innocently admitted that when he had been a layman, a Jansenist priest had refused to give him absolution on the grounds that there was nothing to absolve in his confession. Realizing that he had just disclosed a secret aspect of his inner life, Father Frederic corrected himself: "I should have confessed a sin from my past." But a witness noticed that this last sentence was added only through humility and in order to distract attention.

To Fathers Remi Leprêtre and Théophile Gin, O.F.M., both from Le Portel, he described the displeasure which he had felt once on a trip to Boulogne-sur-Mer in the company of two young men who talked much too freely in the stage-coach.

"When we reached our destination, we stopped at the Hotel du Cygne. Those two fellows kept up their merry-making and drank heavily. Although gifted with ability, they were wasting away their lives in all sorts of extravagance and foolishness." Luckily, their behavior, instead of scandalizing Frederic, gave him a still greater horror for all dissipation. He was remembered in Estaires as a "very serious-minded young man who was quite reserved toward others."

He was a boarder in the house of a painter and glazer named François Charles Van Méris (1833-1903), a bachelor who lived with his unmarried sister.³ One day this lady came home wearing under her coat the large Tertiary habit. The boarders were struck with admiration for this costume which was so becoming in its austere simplicity. Their conversation turned to the Third Order of St. Francis: its origin, excellence, and advantages. It was therefore this devout woman who revealed St. Francis of Assisi to Frederic.⁴

Frederic was greatly edified and desired more information about the lovable founder of the Order of Penance.

During one of his sales journeys he went to Hazebrouck where he wished to seek the advice of his brother Pierre and especially of the Abbé Dehaene, that great protector of religious vocations. The headmaster of the Hazebrouck high school was a Franciscan Tertiary. In 1865 he would place his institution under the patronage of St. Francis of Assisi. He encouraged his former pupil to yield to the attraction of the Poverello. Why should not Frederic too, now that his obligation to support his mother was discharged and that he had been refused by the Trappists, follow the youthful Francis of the 13th century, who had permanently given up for God the rich store and flourishing business of his father Bernardone, who was a linen merchant, as Frederic himself was in Estaires? The Abbé Dehaene loaned him a life of the Seraphic Father and especially the *Fioretti* or "Little Flowers," that golden book of the Middle Ages written in poetic prose.

The personality of Francis of Assisi, his ideal of the evangelical life, and his apostolate completely won the heart of the young businessman. He took a growing interest in the Franciscans.

He had been happy to see the gradual re-establishment in France of the religious Orders and Congregations that the Revolution of 1789 had mercilessly destroyed or driven into exile. In fact, since the beginning of the 19th century, one after another, nearly all of the religious Orders had been restored: Vincentians, Paris Foreign Missions Fathers, Holy Ghost Fathers, Trappist monks and nuns, Capuchins, Carthusians, Jesuits, Benedictines, and Dominicans.

The turn of the Friars Minor also came. After several attempts in 1816, 1825, 1834, and 1837, the definitive re-establishment of the Franciscan Order was accomplished by Father Joseph Areso, a holy and energetic Spanish Observant, who had been commissioned by his Superiors to restore the Order and the Commissariat of the Holy Land in France. On October 20, 1860, the communities which he founded there were canonically organized into a formal Province, that of St. Louis d'Anjou, Bishop of Toulouse.

It was most probably in the autumn of 1862 that Frederic went back to study in the Hazebrouck High School, where he took regular courses and private lessons under his dear brother Pierre, who was in charge of the second class, and who taught his brother courses in the humanities. This institution considers Frederic Janssoone the forerunner of its pupils with late vocations — and perhaps also their protector — for the "late vocations section," which was founded there in 1908, has developed progressively since then.

During the 1863-64 school year, when a Bishop of the Foreign Missions Society passed through Hazebrouck, Pierre Janssoone conceived the intention of serving in the missions. Later, Father Frederic briefly described his brother's extraordinary vocation thus: "Pierre took me aside and said to

me very confidentially, 'Frederic, I have been desperately unhappy. When I wanted to turn to the right, God pushed to the left, and vice versa. But at last I have heard God's call. It is settled: I am giving up the world and leaving for the Foreign Missions Society where I will do my three years of theology.'"

This was another late vocation. Pierre Janssoone was nearly thirty-two years old when he presented himself at the Seminary of the Paris Foreign Missions Society on the rue du Bac on September 21, 1863. He had already received the tonsure. As he was gifted and well prepared, he found the study of theology easy. In 1866, with the priesthood he received his assignment to Mysore in India.

A famous contemporary teacher, Msgr. Toth, has said: "It is a well known fact that the family lives as long as the mother, the center of the family, survives. The children may be adults and have their own homes, yet as long as the mother is alive, the family remains united. But when the mother dies, the children see one another more rarely or hardly ever. Each one goes his or her own way. Because the mother, who kept them united, is gone."

After the loss of their mother, the children of the Dumont-Janssoone family continued to disperse in the world, as their poverty had already obliged them to do. Nevertheless, even across the narrow geographical horizons, there remained a mystic link between them. All of them found a unifying element in the living memory of their mother's example and teaching. And for several of them, sufferings on earth and the mediation in heaven of their mother brought a closer union with God through the intermediary of a supernatural family. Each in his own way followed the guidance of that lofty Christian spirit which their mother had given them. Her influence survived.

The last will of the eldest of the Dumont-Janssoone family, Jean Baptiste Dumont, written in 1873, recalled the memory and influence of his holy mother, who had died in

his home: "I wish to die in the Holy Apostolic Roman Catholic religion in which I had the honor of being raised... The Good God, having heard the prayer of my venerated mother when she was dying, has blessed my home and allowed me to amass a small fortune... It has pleased the Lord to call back to Himself three of the six children that He gave me. May His holy will be respected and His Holy Name be forever blessed! If He had deigned to let me have all of them, I would have found all my happiness in making men, good Christians, of those whom I no longer have, as with God's help I was able to make of those who remain... And now, farewell, my dear ones! Farewell, my dear brothers and sisters! Farewell, my friends! Remember me in your prayers. And above all, may my brothers [Pierre and Frederic] not forget me in the holy Sacrifice of the Mass. May God forgive all my faults, have pity on my soul, and receive it in the bosom of His mercy."

After the death of their mother, vocations to the religious life blossomed almost simultaneously among the Janssoone children. Pierre, the oldest of those of the second marriage, joined the Paris Foreign Missions Society and labored tirelessly for forty-four years in a mission in India, where he was called "the saint." Frederic, the youngest, was soon to take the Franciscan habit in the novitiate at Amiens.

As for Henri, he too had requested and obtained admission to the Franciscan Order, when at the age of thirty he was accidentally drowned on August 24, 1867, while swimming in the Lys River at Nieppe near Armentières. He left an excellent reputation for virtuous simplicity. He was a former artillery sergeant and chief assistant pyrotechnist in the explosives school in Metz. He admitted to Frederic that it was due to a real miracle of the Blessed Virgin's protection that he was able to keep his soul pure amid the shocking corruption of army life. Mary Immaculate had given her motherly protection to her devoted servant who had joined the Association of the Very Holy and Immaculate Heart of Mary on January 11, 1863, in the church of Notre-Dame in Metz. One

of his letters gives evidence of his courage in practising his religion:

"This very true saying keeps coming back to my mind: to find happiness wherever we are is the greatest secret of the wise man. My conduct is more criticized than ever, as all the students have the same rank as I, and most of them a higher rank. They don't mind telling me that I am a Jesuit when they see me go to Mass on Sundays. But I find consolation in reminding myself that we have to accept stoically the remarks and insults of the wicked. Since I have overcome human respect, I do not hesitate to tell them the frank truth, which silences them all and cuts short even the smartest of them."

After having thus endured for seven years the scorn of the military students at the explosives school, Henri went back to high school at the age of twenty-eight and finished his humanities course at the minor seminary of Cambrai in order to become a priest. He had received Holy Communion on the morning of the day he died. "He fed the hungry and gave clothes to the naked" (Tob. 1, 20). This beautiful eulogy printed on his memorial card reveals his charity, adding, "A premature death has taken him from us, but he shall have rest because he was a just man." His whole life was spent in the courageous practice of religion.

Annette Janssoone had been an Augustinian nun at Arras since 1854, with the name of Soeur Marie des Anges (Mary of the Angels). For seven years she served as pharmacist at the military hospital of Arras. When Pierre and Frederic spoke of her, they called her: "Our Angel." Her life, like her brothers' and her mother's, was one of eminent virtue. With the permission of her spiritual director, rather than submit to an operation in her side, she kept a physical affliction which made her endure a martyrdom for eleven years and caused her death in intense suffering at the age of thirty-nine, on May 18, 1872.

Frederic wrote to his niece Léonie: "Consider the designs of Providence. Before the death of my mother, whose beautiful soul is in heaven — we cannot doubt it — none of us was

thinking of the religious or priestly life. Then all of a sudden and almost simultaneously, Pierre, Henri, and I came to the same decision. Is that not striking?"

This extraordinary instance of three vocations to the priesthood blossoming rather suddenly in the same family had also impressed Pierre Janssoone. While he was at the Paris Foreign Missions Society seminary in 1865, he wrote to his sister and godmother Victoire, who was then taking the mother's place, and to his brother Henri: "Yes, indeed, you can be sure that God has not said His last word regarding your children. Don't you know that when there is a saint interceding in heaven for the family, marvelous events take place in the order of grace? You are well aware that it is since the death of our holy and venerated mother that all these workings of grace have occurred. And surely everything about it is extraordinary: an experienced teacher (Pierre) gives up all scholastic honors to become a missionary, a former salesman (Frederic) takes the habit and cord of St. Francis, and an old soldier goes back to school."

It was only at the end of his novitiate with the Franciscan Fathers in Amiens that Frederic learned from his sister Marie des Anges the secret of their mother that resulted in all four vocations. Mme. Janssoone had made an offering of herself as a victim and had suffered for twenty-eight years in order to obtain the grace of having priests among her children. Pierre rightly summed up the life of their saintly mother in a letter to Frederic: "Our mother died in the odor of sanctity; the last twenty-eight years of her life were nothing but a long martyrdom, and her last moments were marked by the most extraordinary act which virtue can accomplish: the vocation of us four children of her second marriage."

In the course of a retreat which Father Frederic once gave to some Sisters in the Holy Land, he summarized the merits and virtues of the principal members of his earthly family. Without specifically naming them, he mentioned as examples of faith and love of God "certain persons whom he

had known in the world who practised great virtues;" he referred to the heroic patience of his sister Marie des Anges, to the fearless faith of his brother Henri, and to the purity of soul which Henri preserved thanks to his devotion to the Blessed Virgin. He referred to the laborious apostolate of his brother Pierre as a missionary in India, and finally to the extraordinary faith of his mother, who accepted the trials and tribulations of a long life and died with all the characteristics of a predestined soul.

Like "The Little Flower," St. Therese of Lisieux, Frederic was truly to be "the reward of a model family." His soul was to become more than a flower of spirituality; we may say that it was to be like a bouquet of fresh and scented flowers whose many colors symbolize the virtues which blossomed under the patient sun of divine grace among the different members of his natural family.

Those delicate blossoms of the Holy Spirit were to attain their perfect flowering in the bosom of his supernatural family, the Order of Friars Minor.

Chapter 5

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI

(1864-1870)

After his mother's death, Frederic spent a vacation at the home of his brother-in-law, Pierre-Emmanuel Deswarte, in Leffrinckoucke near Ghyvelde. There he found again the hospitality and charm of his own home. And in his elder half-sister Victoire, who was very kind and charitable, he could see the loving Christian devotion of his mother, who thus for him had not completely disappeared.

He also found there his half-sister Sophie Dumont, whom Victoire was taking care of, as requested by her mother when dying. Sophie was a tiny woman only three feet and eight inches tall. She had always retained the simplicity of a child. This affliction, with which she was born, was the result of a nervous shock which her pregnant mother experienced during a fire. She deserved compassion more than the others. Frederic assigned his share of his inheritance to her before leaving the world. In his letters written to Victoire when he was a religious, Frederic expressed a very special affection for his half-sister Sophie. Thus he wrote from Bordeaux on January 2, 1872: "Give little Sophie a good kiss for me, and tell her that I have not forgotten her at all, but that I often pray for her."¹

Victoire was dearly loved by her brothers and sisters. She had now become, as her dying mother wished, a living link between them. Celebrations and funerals brought them together in her home.

It was there, in June, 1864, during one of the traditional banquets — which in Flanders last a whole afternoon — that Frederic bade farewell to the world. He had left the Notre Dame des Dunes Institute eight years earlier. He was now twenty-eight years old. Léonie has left us a brief account of her uncle's departure which is stirring in its simplicity:

My uncle Frederic was joyful and recollected, like someone who has just obtained a great favor from heaven. As he walked away to take the train in Dunkerque, I went with him to the turn in the road. There, under the tall poplar trees, he said to me with emotion in his voice: "I am giving up the world. We will see each other again in heaven." Those words had the same message as the "Follow Me" which Our Lord said to Peter and Andrew, for my uncle Frederic believed that I too was called to the religious life. A little farther on, he turned and gently waved his handkerchief to me as a last farewell. It was to be forever. We were not destined to meet again in this world.

The train ride from Dunkerque to Amiens took four hours. At the Franciscan Novitiate in Amiens, Frederic found a community living a life of poverty, penance, and strict observance, with utter fervor and true seraphic spirit, in the quarters in which the Venerable François Marie Paul Libermann, co-founder of the Congregation of the Holy Ghost and of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, had begun his apostolate. The building was worthy of the saintly man who had planned it, of the work that had been founded there and the one which now occupied it. Added to the narrow dimensions of the cells, the absence of any kind of comfort, and the exceedingly difficult diet, was a climate which was extremely cold in winter.

The Father Master lead Frederic to the friary's top floor, which was reserved for the novices. The new postulant had the strange impression of entering into the mysterious realm of Lady Poverty.

There was nothing to surprise him in a human way about the tiny cells in the attic: they were seven and a half feet long by four and a half wide. The span-roof made the ceiling slant down: the room was seven feet high at the door but only

four at the far end. As a matter of fact, these cells were so small and so low that they simply had no room for worldly things. The only window was a skylight in the roof which obliged the novice to look up to heaven, from which came the welcome light of the sun and holy thoughts. The novices located on the north side of the building could see nothing but housetops and the famous cathedral with its beautiful "lace-work" of bell-turrets and its slender steeple. The rooms on the other side looked out on the major seminary. This arrangement precluded any sight of "the world."

A crucifix and a picture of Mary Immaculate were the only ornaments in the cells. To save room, the novice put his single stool under the working table. For some, the foot of the bed had to do as a chair.

For fear that "the old man" might still form some slight attachment to his poor and tiny cell — the glorious tomb from which "the new man" was one day to arise — the novice had to leave it for another once a month and sometimes even more often. And of course the new cell had no more space or comfort than the old one. "Let the Brothers be as pilgrims and strangers in this world, serving the Lord in poverty and humility," St. Francis had written in the Rule of the Friars Minor (Chapter VI). These frequent moves from one cell to another were for the novices of Amiens a way of fulfilling their Seraphic Father's advice to become resolute "pilgrims of the Absolute."

The extreme poverty of the Novitiate was neither a disappointment nor an obstacle for Frederic. On the contrary, he eagerly welcomed this hard life which he had been seeking. From the start, he attuned himself to the general tone of fervor.

The intense and regular religious life in the Novitiate at Amiens, which made no concessions to human weakness, was characterized by those Franciscan virtues which the forceful restorer, Father Joseph Areso, had brought from the more

austere friaries of the Order in Spain, and which he had firmly and successfully implanted in that French land which was so dear to St. Francis.

The Very Reverend Minister General Venanzio da Celano had formally expressed his will that the restoration of the Franciscan Order in France be accomplished in the spirit of a strict observance of the Rule. At the foundation of the friary in Amiens, he had written these decisive lines to Father Areso: "The Seraphic Order must be reborn in France in its primitive purity — otherwise let it not be done at all. Such is our will, and such is indeed the will of God. Such is the need of the people today. Such finally is the goal of your mission." Father Areso faithfully followed this directive, which also was in perfect harmony with his personal ideal and religious training.

After an eight-day retreat, Frederic received the Franciscan habit on June 26, 1864, from the hands of Father Léonard Loizemant, Guardian of the Amiens friary and delegate of the Very Reverend Father Emmanuel Béovidé, who had succeeded Father Areso as Provincial. In accordance with the fourth Regulation adopted by the Provincial Chapter held in Bourges on November 29, 1860, he kept as the patron of his religious life the one that he had received in baptism. Until his ordination he was known as *Frater Frédéric de Saint Yves* as he was allowed to select the latter patron by the same regulation. The ceremony of taking the habit was held in a humble chapel. The friary did not yet have the beautiful church which was to be its pride later on.²

Among the guests who were present were some relatives of the new novice and the Abbé Durcoquet, pastor of Estaires, accompanied by a cousin of the Ledieu family. After the ceremony, the Father Guardian confided the young religious to the care of the Novice Master, Father Léon de Clary.

This Novice Master, who was to be elected Minister Provincial of his Province of St. Louis in 1869, was a man of remarkably strong character. He had acquired experience in

dealing with souls while serving — under the name of Father Vieu — as parish priest in the diocese of Carcassonne before he entered the Franciscan Order. He had a great reputation for austerity. It was said that in this field he strove above all to imitate the Saints and Blessed of the Order whose lives he had written. In fact the lives of St. Francis and of the Saints of his Order were the constant object of his studies. All his free moments were devoted to the writing of his standard work, *L'Auréole Séraphique* (in four volumes), which was destined to make known St. Francis and the Saints and Blessed of the three Orders of the Seraphic family. His often expressed goal as Master was to make his novices "saints — not ordinary saints — but miracle-working saints who could convert the greatest sinners." In a word, he was a religious who had a very lofty ideal of his mission.

Frater Frederic's generous soul profited from the guidance of such a master of Franciscan spirituality. He acquired a knowledge of the Rule of St. Francis in its most severe austerity, of the virtues of the Poverello, of a practical method of prayer, etc. The atmosphere of religious fervor and the practice of rigorous mortification which characterized the friary in Amiens transformed his being.

Under the slate roof of the novitiate, which made the attic cells excessively hot in summer and icy in winter, Frederic's austere and admirable religious life began — that way of life which astounded those who knew him. Men of experience and knowledge such as Dr. Bourgeois and Dr. Gervais of Trois-Rivières considered it beyond the limits of human strength.

"I have never suffered so much from cold as in Amiens," Father Frederic admitted one day to Father Duguay, pastor of Cap de la Madeleine. "The monastery was not heated. When we got up in the morning to recite the Office, we had to break the ice in our washbasins in order to wash."

At home his mother's training had accustomed him to a simple and frugal life. He was therefore able to adapt him-

self without trouble to the strict mortification which was practised at meals in the novitiate and which he was to maintain for the rest of his life. The Friars of Amiens were not satisfied merely with the various periods of fasting prescribed by the Church and by their Rule. They followed the example of their Founder, who made the entire year an almost continuous fast. They added a number of supererogatory fasts, and they made them very strict indeed. They abstained completely from eating meat during their fasts, including Sundays as well. On the mornings of fast days they took nothing until noon. If someone felt weak, he was not given the least dispensation on this point except on the advice of the council of the community. At all times the food was exceedingly lacking in seasoning. And very often even such staples as bread were not available!

A minor incident with a medieval touch, which is found in the archives of this Franciscan Province, may serve as a perfect illustration of the strictness of the customs at that time. In 1860 an innovator — and who among us has not at some period of our life tried to make innovations? — wished that the use of coffee at breakfast, which was reserved exclusively for the sick, should be extended to everyone. He quickly regretted having uttered this wish. Frère Marie — that was his name — immediately received a severe reprimand and was unhesitatingly informed that he could go and seek his happiness in the world or in an Order that was less austere. “What is such a suggestion if it is not a relaxing of the Rule? You came here to do penance, but you don’t want to submit to it!” The Friar’s repentance was admirable and moving. With humble and abashed contrition, he wrote an edifying detailed retraction which was read in all the friaries of the Province. It ended with these words: “I hope that you will not refuse to forgive a child who acknowledges his guilt and who is aware of his fault from the very bottom of his heart.” The good Friar was henceforth fully forgiven by the superiors, who ordered that neither priests nor lay brothers should mention the incident again.

The life of a novice can be summed up thus: "the faithful observance of the Rule." Days spent in this changeless observance follow one another with a kind of monotony that lacks anything that is especially noteworthy. When it can be said of a novice that he was notable for his regularity, fervor, and obedience, that is about all that can be said. In this respect, the life of Frater Frederic as a novice was irreproachable.

We know that for a long time he kept deeply imprinted on his soul the memory of that period of fervor and of his first training as a religious and a Franciscan. On the occasion of his silver jubilee as Commissary of the Holy Land, he clearly said so: "I consider the year 1913 as my year of reparation, as that of my novitiate was for the first quarter century of my life."³ We also know that he was one of those religious who would have liked to prolong or repeat their novitiate in order to reach a still higher degree of perfection. He expressed this devout wish several times, particularly during his pilgrimage in 1876 to the Holy House of Loretto, "the sweetest shrine in the world." In describing his trip to the Holy Land, he wrote:

We arrived at the Holy House. One of the most beautiful dreams of my life had come true. Very Reverend Father, please forgive me if I do not express my impressions and my intimate feelings. They cannot be uttered. They remain the secret of the Holy Family..... How wonderful it would be, Very Reverend Father, if we could do our novitiate over again at the Holy House, in this mother house which is the model of all the novitiates in the world! How well we would learn the secrets of the interior life here in this solitude where everything was interior, silent, celestial!...! O Holy House of Nazareth, what a great and instructive school you are for everyone, but how dear a solitude you are for my soul! O my God, give me the grace of detaching me ever more and more from all earthly things and of enclosing me for the rest of my days in this sweet solitude so that I may obtain from Your divine goodness the grace, at the hour of my death, of falling peacefully asleep, like Joseph, in the arms of Jesus and of Mary. Fiat! Fiat!

This prayer was granted: for the rest of his days Father Frederic did shut himself up in the inner depths of his soul, in the sweet solitude of the Holy House of Nazareth.

However, during the course of his novitiate, Frater Frederic was to undergo intense temptations to yield to discouragement. In order to undermine the novice's confidence in his own strength, God made him pass through the trial of distress and of doubt, through that temptation of generous and sensitive souls who become dismayed before an ideal which attracts them while also seeming to be unattainable. He wished soon to find himself at the summit of spiritual perfection, but he despaired of ever reaching it. "Alas, I am not doing enough in the service of God. I am not corresponding enough with divine grace. I am really not equal to my vocation... How lofty are the heights of sanctity! I will never be able to reach them! What a saint — even a great saint — one must be to be a true son of St. Francis of Assisi. I will always be a too unworthy son of his. Would I not do better to return to the world? And now the day of my simple and solemn Profession is approaching!"

He prayed, reflected, and in all simplicity consulted the Novice Master. The latter gave him this advice: "The Franciscan life is the right place for you. Just be patient. God will complete His work. Several Saints might have lost their soul if they had endured the mysterious delays of Providence with less constancy." Henceforth peace returned to Frederic's soul. His driving fervor as a novice began to adjust itself to the progressive stages of God's grace, the mystery of His slowness and His patience. He learned from his own experience that even in the garden of the Seraphic Order a rose cannot be made to blossom merely by tugging at the bud. He therefore resigned himself no longer to look upon the novitiate as a miraculous hothouse in which his soul could mature in a few weeks.

Frater Frederic's one-year novitiate thus passed alternatively in a sun-filled calm and in stormy trials. But in his times

of anxious stress as in those of profound peace, the courageous novice was nonetheless faithful in the firm practice of the virtues, especially those which blossom in the shadow of the cross — humility, obedience, mortification — and that detachment from earthly things for which he later prayed so fervently in the Holy House of Loretto. He summed up these different phases of his year of probation in a letter which he wrote on July 3, 1865, to his brother Jean Baptiste and his sister Victoire:

After endless struggles and hesitations, I have come to the eve of bidding farewell to the world, to its wealth, to its pleasures, and to its honors, by contracting sacred and indissoluble bonds. In brief, by taking simple and perpetual Vows, I am going to become the child, the humble child of St. Francis of Assisi, that extraordinary man whom God called forth at the end of the twelfth century in order to brand the scandals of the world by the burning flame of his preaching and to revive faith in hearts by the holiness of his life.

His religious Profession took place on July 18, 1865. On the next day, his superiors sent him to Limoges to study philosophy and science as a preparation for the priesthood.

A few days after his arrival, he was happy to find again Father Léon de Clary, who had so skillfully directed him during the novitiate, and whom the Provincial Chapter had just appointed the new Guardian of the Limoges community.

The large stone friary — which is today a retreat house for elderly priests under the care of the Franciscan Sisters of Our Lady of the Temple — and the beautiful garden surrounded by a stone wall adjoin the Louyat Cemetery. The Franciscan Friars were responsible for providing the last prayers for the dead.

Bit by bit the northerner Frederic learned more about Limoges, which was a main center for the manufacture of shoes, porcelain, and artistic enamel. In a long interesting letter dated October 15, 1868, after some pious reflections, Frater Frederic gave his niece Léonie information about the

town and its 25,000 inhabitants, its famous porcelain industry, and its manufacturing processes. He also included some remarks about the Limousin country and peasants. He had begun to realize, now that he was far from home, that his northern region, although fertile, was somewhat unhealthy because of its frequent fogs.

When his philosophy course in Limoges was finished, Frater Frederic went to study theology for four years in Bourges, the geographical center of France. The recently founded friary satisfied the austere requirements of Lady Poverty and of Father Areso's Seraphic ideal: the rooms and furnishings were very complete, regular, plain and modest; the forty-odd cells with tiny windows contained only a minimum of furniture. When the Church and the State were separated in France, this Franciscan friary became the property of the archdiocese of Bourges; since 1938 it has been occupied by the secondary teachers college, the Institution Sainte-Marie, on the rue Jean Baffier.

Frater Frederic studied theology under Fathers Ange (Gineys) de Molières, Jacques (Atauri) de la Passion, and Théodore (Spas) de la T. S. Vierge.

He had been a fervent novice; during his scholasticate he was a zealous, conscientious, disciplined, and devout student.

As soon as he arrived at the friary in Limoges, he made a detailed daily schedule for himself. This was a method he had learned from his Novice Master. Father Léon de Clary gave a systematic rule of life to everyone under his spiritual direction, including even lay persons.

We have a copy of one of these rules before us. This eight-page leaflet, which was printed with the imprimatur of the Bishop of Limoges and bears the date December 29, 1872, is dedicated "To Souls of Good Will" and begins with these sententious words: "There is a time for everything. A rule of life is better than a guaranteed income."

This habit of putting order in his life and of regulating his time, which he acquired at the beginning of his religious life, was one of the secrets of Father Frederic's success as an apostle. Perseverance in a single methodical course of action enabled him to undertake and to achieve a variety of plans which are astounding in their number, their magnitude, and their duration.

Apart from his regular courses, Frater Frederic took upon himself a considerable amount of supplementary work. His notes recorded at this time are numerous. They constitute a kind of private encyclopedia in which he accumulated quotations and materials which he might need in the future: abstracts of philosophy, theology, and canon law; notes on history, geography, and astronomy; condensations of botany, art, preaching, ascetism, and mysticism. They also contain data on architecture, archeology, paleography, etc. He was storing up great quantities of material for later on. Subsequently, amid the countless surprises and hardships of his preaching ministry, he made abundant use of these notes.

They are systematically classified in fourteen small notebooks. The manuscripts have a significance of their own. "From the first to the last page, they invariably reveal the young religious' serious character, zeal for work, and maturity of judgment, as well as his spirit of devotion and his preoccupation with his future ministry. They also disclose a good dose of interest in all the sciences, while the neatness and regularity of his handwriting denote a clear and methodical mind." ⁴

Frater Frederic placed a very significant picture on the first page of the first notebook. It serves to illustrate this page in the book of his life: a soul, threatened by the assaults of the devil, takes refuge at the foot of the Cross, where the Blessed Virgin, as all-powerful Queen of heaven and earth, crushes the head of the infernal serpent and pierces it with a sharp arrow, while as an all-kind Mother she protects the frightened soul and graciously shelters it under her cloak. Under the picture Frater Frederic inscribed this short and

fervent prayer in his finest handwriting: *O Virgo, studiis semper adesto meis!* (O blessed Virgin, ever help me in my studies!)

While prayer brought light into his mind, his heart already felt an extraordinary attraction for the lives of the Saints. Under the direction of Father Léon de Clary, he studied the writings of the Bollandists and the old writers of the Franciscan Order in order to compile material for the *Auréole Séraphique*. It is also probable that Father Léon had him write out the manuscript in his excellent handwriting before sending it to the printer. It was at this time too that the young seminarian undertook the first of his own books, a life of Blessed Jeanne Marie de Maillé, which was published only after he was ordained.

Thus for several long years he lived a student's life without outstanding events, in an ascending advance toward the heights of the priesthood.

On December 26, 1868, he took his Solemn Vows in Bourges. The Very Reverend Father Ollivier, a famous Dominican, gave the sermon.

Frazer Frederic had received the tonsure and Minor Orders at Limoges on June 6, 1868. Now at Bourges, when the summons to the subdiaconate approached, as during the great turning points of his life, his timid soul began to hesitate and to tremble before the prospect of the responsibilities of the priesthood and the care of souls and especially before the dignity of the priestly calling. Consequently, the Very Reverend Father Provincial felt the need of sending him a letter on March 26, 1869, urging him to submit to the will of God. Frazer Frederic was told by the voice of his Superiors that "God, who has hitherto given you grace, will not refuse it in the future too." Henceforth, strengthened by this authoritative advice, the aspirant to the priesthood laid the last hesitation of his soul at the feet of Jesus Christ.

The Provincial's letter reveals the vulnerable aspects of Frederic's sensitive and generous heart. However, in the end, his humility and submission prevailed.

Frater Frederic took the first step toward the priesthood when he received the subdiaconate on May 22, 1869. Then, on November 7 of the same year, he was ordained a deacon by the celebrated Archbishop of Bourges, Monseigneur de la Tour d'Auvergne.

Chapter 6

EARLY MINISTRY

(1870-1871)

An unexpected turn in political events hastened Frater Frederic's ordination to the priesthood. On July 17, 1870, Napoleon III rashly declared war on Prussia. His government had been cleverly provoked by Bismarck and had placed too much confidence in statements by Marshal Leboeuf, the Minister of War, such as "We are ready, absolutely ready. Our army does not lack even a single gaiter-button." All France responded enthusiastically to the call to arms. However, the spiritual and material needs of an army of some 250,000 soldiers required chaplains and hospital orderlies.

It was in order to meet this unexpected need that the Franciscan Superiors decided to advance slightly the date for the ordination of Frater Frederic, who was of draft age. On August 17, 1870, one month after the declaration of war, he was ordained a priest by Monseigneur de la Tour d'Auvergne, Archbishop of Bourges, in the prelate's chapel.

The day after his ordination, Father Frederic celebrated his first Holy Mass in the Franciscan church. His lifelong friend, Frater Augustin Bouynot, was the subdeacon, having received that order the day before. He declared later that the profound devotion and intense gratitude of the new priest was evident in the tears which he shed.

Father Frederic was appointed a military chaplain and served in the improvised hospital that had been established in the boarding school of the Sacred Heart Sisters (Dames du

Sacré Coeur) of Bourges, not far from the Franciscan Friary. In our times this building is occupied by a boys' school on the Boulevard Maréchal Joffre. The first plan of the military authorities had been to let the nuns take care of the sick rather than the wounded soldiers. Before the boarding school was transformed into a hospital, it had been used as a warehouse for army supplies at Bourges. Wagons drawn by four or six horses brought quantities of bales which were piled into the rooms. Then the orders were changed.

Efficiency suffered from the suddenness of the war and the rapid succession of events. As in times of turmoil when everyone is upset and doesn't know what to do next, one telegram followed, crossed, or contradicted another and resulted in annoying complications. As a matter of fact, there was a lack of coordination among the authorities. Each high officer wanted to win a victory in his own way and earn promotion to the rank of marshal. Consequently, confusion reigned in the hospital corps as in the other departments of the army. The situation bore out the truth of the French saying: "Order — counterorder — disorder."

On September 22, 1870, the first floor of the Sacred Heart Sisters' boarding school was transformed into a military hospital, and was taken over by fifty-two orderlies. Two days later they were replaced by seminarians, assisted by Daughters of Charity. The hospital chronicle records: "All of a sudden an official message informed us that the building would be occupied by patients that same evening. On September 27, our new guests arrived — one hundred of them. They were victims of all the most contagious diseases: small pox, dysentery and typhoid fever.

"A few days later, we had to prepare another fifty beds... One day we would be informed that five hundred patients were coming — the next day it was a thousand... The deaths were so numerous that twelve were recorded in a single day. The room to which the bodies were moved contained up to sixteen at a time, and several remained there from Saturday

until Thursday without our being able to make arrangements for the burials."

It was in this confused atmosphere of human suffering and mourning that Father Frederic now evolved, encountering every day contagion or death, cowardice or heroic selflessness, despair or touching generosity, and sometimes espionage or treason.

A spy had slipped in among the patients in the hospital by means of a fraudulent pass. He spread a spirit of discouragement among all who came or went. His strange attitude made him an object of suspicion, and his companions were soon convinced that he was a Prussian sympathizer. They were about to attack him when a Daughter of Charity appeared and stopped them. Seeing himself under suspicion, the stranger asked a seminarian for a pass to go out the next morning. The seminarian, knowing little about such wartime ruses, gave it to him. That same day, however, the spy, although disguised, was arrested and sent to prison.

Father Frederic gave himself to his ministry among the sick with all his priestly heart, as a friend and a father, with selflessness enlightened by faith and stimulated by an untiring charity which was already definitely heroic. In the military hospital of Bourges he found men with contagious diseases or wounds inflicted in battle, with their heads wrapped in a turban of bandages, arms in slings, legs strapped in splints or supported by crutches, and many other afflictions.

As a true minister of God, Father Frederic loved souls — all souls — with a disinterested, fatherly, and supernatural love. He gloried in never having rebuffed one of them. He made himself all things to all men. Nevertheless, among the sick soldiers there were all kinds of men: prodigal sons, prejudiced sectarians, and braggarts, as well as good and even outstanding Christians — as always, the tares were mixed in with the good grain. But their confidence was won when they perceived on the young Franciscan's features his seriousness, his utter selflessness, his frank simplicity, and sincere love of

God. Even the worst unbelievers respected him and in their contacts with him revealed that they were not so bad as they seemed to be.

Father Frederic deliberately included personal assistance to the sick among the other aspects of his ministry. This was a practice which he continued throughout his life. Like several of the Saints, he believed that time spent at the bedside of the sick was very well spent. Had not his Seraphic Father, St. Francis, at the beginning of his conversion, nursed with his own hands and consoled with comforting words men afflicted with advanced cases of leprosy, which was then considered extremely contagious? * In the eyes of the new priest, suffering was a providential wound that opened the innermost depths of the human heart. His loving kindness achieved the most valuable cures, those of the soul, as it restored the spiritual health of the patients.

The officers, doctors, orderlies, and patients, seeing his untiring charity, called him "our good little chaplain." For this chaplain, who seemed to have unlimited time and energy for his work, succeeded in making his priestly ministry popular. It was therefore not surprising that striking conversions occurred in the military hospital of Bourges. The institution's chronicle states:

We could record a large number of spiritual favors which have been granted among the patients in the hospital, and also the eagerness of the soldiers to receive medals and scapulars. There have been many soldiers who came back to God or who have received their First Communion in the wards — also there was the baptism of a dying Moslem. The cure and conversion of M. Fernand X. were especially noteworthy.

According to Father Augustin, this first assignment of Father Frederic as a young chaplain was very fruitful and consoling.¹ Only God knows how many soldiers were reconciled to the Church and how many hearts were consoled in their troubles of all kinds. But this supernatural success was achieved at the cost of innumerable sacrifices and hardships

and even of mortifications involving the shedding of blood. The winter of 1870-71 was extremely cold in France. Nevertheless, Father Frederic wanted to remain faithful as far as possible to the practice of wearing nothing on his feet except sandals, as prescribed by the Rule of St. Francis. Frequently he had to be at the bedside of soldiers and help them to die as Christians. Then he would accompany them to their last resting place. With only his plain Franciscan sandals on his feet, he would walk along snow-filled streets and roads for each funeral to the public cemetery located more than two miles from the town. Most of the time when he reached the grave, his feet were bleeding. Then he would bless the grave and recite the last prayers on behalf of the dead man's absent family.

The intense cold was not able to quench the young priest's joyful fervor. Where did he draw the source of his courage? In meditating on such sayings as those of St. Paul: "I will most gladly spend and be spent myself for your souls."²

Father Frederic made this self-immolation the theme of his whole life.

While the Franciscan chaplain was selflessly serving the unfortunate victims of the war, the German forces were making desperate attempts to reach Bourges. But God protected and defended the town. In the words of the chronicle of the Sacred Heart Sisters:

Not the least of our fears was that of seeing the enemy at the gates of the city. They had already invaded Orleans. We were told that the authorities were urging the townspeople to defend themselves, which meant that we would be given over to fire and pillage. These fears did not come true. The town was saved by a vow which the Most Reverend Archbishop made to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. Seven times the Prussian forces set out to capture Bourges; seven times their orders were cancelled. Consequently they said, "the town is bewitched. There is some invisible force which is throwing us back." The army of the enemy stopped within twelve miles of Bourges.

The armistice was signed at the end of January, 1871.

Father Frederic was then discharged from military service and went back to his friary.

On May 13, 1871, the Provincial Council, in session at Bourges, appointed Father Frederic librarian and assistant novice master at Branday near Bordeaux.

Perhaps he had settled there as soon as the war was over, for his first printed work was signed at Branday on March 19, 1871. In collaboration with Father Raphael d'Aurillac, he had just revised and completed the biography of St. Francis of Assisi written by the Abbé Berthamier, a Tertiary priest who was a devoted friend of the Franciscan Order. The book's preface is signed: "Fr. Raphael and Fr. Frederic, Observant Minors, of our monastery at Branday (Gironde), March 19, 1871, Feast of St. Joseph." ³

The little monastery of Branday must have been somewhat like Rivo Torto, both in its poverty and its poetic scenery. It was neither beautiful nor comfortable. It was in need of repairs, and its cells were not too healthy. On the other hand the hills, groves, and streams, and the pretty cottages grouped around the ancient chateau gave it a romantic atmosphere. This sorry-looking novitiate was located on the edge of the prosperous vineyards of Saint Emilion, which produce a well-known Bordeaux wine. In the midst of the rich countryside, it seemed like a monument erected to honor poverty and the spirit of sacrifice.

In such a building it might be said that all beauty sought refuge in the interior of souls. It impelled its inmates to strive all the more to accumulate spiritual wealth, and this was a valuable compensation. As a matter of fact, religious fervor was especially intense in this novitiate, which was a real *ritiro*,⁴ worthy of the houses of recollection founded in Italy by St. Bernardine of Siena and St. Leonard of Porto Maurizio. All the great virtues of the monastic life were flourishing: humility, absolute blind obedience, austere mort-

ification, prolonged prayer, and a seraphic joy that was as radiant as the discipline was strict.

At Brandy as at Amiens, the Friars' way of life was reminiscent of the heroic beginnings of the Franciscan Order. Silence was strictly observed. There was never a dispensation from reading at meals. Conversation was permitted only at the noonday recreation. Two hours of each day were given to prayer and meditation. At midnight the silvery peal of the bell broke the mystic silence of the lonely countryside and called the Friars to choir for Matins. Fasts were more severe than elsewhere. The ancient rule of the Church which forbade the use of eggs and milk products during Lent was followed. Moreover, the so-called "*Benedicta lent*" of forty days, beginning at the Epiphany, which the Rule of St. Francis recommends to the members of the First Order, was also observed.

In this fervent atmosphere Father Frederic gave the impression of a living personification of the Rule and a perfect model of the religious life. His will adhered to the holy Rule as ivy entwines itself around an oak tree. He maintained this utter fidelity to the Rule from the day he entered the Novitiate at Amiens until the very end of his life. As a true child of divine wisdom, he lived on love and obedience. His days were spent in study — particularly of the Bible — manual labor, and prayer. When the bell rang for the Office, he joyfully left whatever he was doing in order to go and recite the praises of the Lord with his brethren. In choir, his pronounciation and attitude were evidence of his respect for the presence of God, and the mere sight of him aroused devotion in others. His regularity at the offices, his steady zeal for prayer, and his unflagging energy in performing all his duties were a source of edification to younger as well as older Friars. All of these qualities made him ideally suited to the task of initiating the novices into the religious life.

No doubt the function of an assistant novice master is not of the first importance. Nevertheless, when it is well performed, it can have a profound influence on certain souls. Father

Frederic's new assignment consisted in collaborating in every way with the Father Master, in taking his place when the latter was absent, in hearing the novices' confessions, in occasionally attending their recreations, and in teaching them the rules of the liturgy and divine office.

The Father Master who was at that time Superior of the Novitiate was not an excitable man. Father Paul Marie Boyer, of Castelnaudary, was "a very calm, prudent, helpful, and kind man." He willingly approved the actions of his collaborators. Father Frederic, as always, gave himself wholeheartedly to the tasks assigned to him by obedience, and proved to be a valued assistant.

Every week he taught the younger Friars not only the liturgy but also the rules of religious courtesy and customs, which are so necessary to priests who are aware of their dignity, and which are so useful to those who have to mingle with all classes of society. The Very Reverend Father Areso, who attached great importance to this point, used to say:

We may have the very best qualities; we may be learned, virtuous, even holy; but if we lack courtesy and if we commit social errors in the eyes of cultured people, we will be despised and we will lose a large part of our merit. In order to avoid that evil, we prescribe that once a week there be a class of **Praxis disciplinae** (practice of discipline) lasting one and a half to two hours. The assistant novice master will have charge of it at Amiens and at Brandy.

What influence did Father Frederic have in his contacts with the novices at Brandy? What was the spiritual teaching which he gave them? In the absence of any documents supplying the answers to these two questions, we can obtain some information from his relations with some other Franciscan novices about thirty years later. In 1898, the novices in Montreal listened to Father Frederic with an awe and a spiritual eagerness that were reflected on their faces. In their eyes, Father Frederic, who by then had acquired both fame and a reputation for sanctity, was a living example of a very

mortified and supernaturally-motivated religious, an ascetic like the great figures of former ages, a man who was steadily pursuing his ascent toward the heights of Christian perfection. Father Mathieu Marie Daunais, O.F.M., recorded a very striking incident which occurred at the beginning of his religious life:

During our novitiate in 1898, at the request of the Very Reverend Father Colomban Dreyer (who later became Titular Archbishop of Adulis and Apostolic Delegate to Indochina), Father Frederic used to come and give us spiritual talks. We enjoyed receiving instruction from him. We felt that we were in the presence of a saint. We instinctively compared him to the Curé of Ars, whose life we were reading in the refectory. We therefore know what his method was, and we have a clear idea of what he meant by a good religious: very simply, a saint. What a gift he had received from above to infuse into the souls of the young aspirants that religious, Catholic, and priestly spirit which filled his own soul! We used to listen to him eagerly, as motionless as statues. His long stories, in which he often played the roles of narrator and actor, seemed short to us because they were so intensely interesting. They left in our minds and hearts the delightful aroma of virtue. In order to show us the Franciscan ideal, he only had to speak of himself, his work, his plans. He did so in a very simple way, without any pretension or ostentation, referring to God all the merit of the good achieved by his ministry. He could have said with St. Paul: "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ." We experienced his gentle influence. His virtue communicated a living force. His words gave forth light, warmth, and holy unction. The power of his eloquence came from his purity, his charity, and all those sublime virtues that blossom in the shadow of the Cross. Finally, in him we contemplated a radiant sanctity which was wholly integrated and lovable. The light of good works, like the light of day, enlightens everyone and wounds no one.

Father Frederic in fact spoke about invisible things as if he saw them with his own eyes. Everything which he described took on a brilliant form, soul, features, and colors. He inspired confidence in us. With him there was no sense of constraint, embarrassment, or human respect. Often without our knowing just how it happened, our respective roles were reversed: we would ask him questions, and he would answer. How filled with light were those intimate talks in which the supernatural was

the main theme! They reminded us spontaneously of our own families. Now we belonged to another family. However, his great kindness did not prevent him from preaching to us a degree of mortification that was not in the least mediocre. He taught the doctrine of St. John of the Cross: "Place no confidence in a man who deprecates acts of penance, even if he performs miracles. Without guarding his senses and mortifying his body, no one will acquire the gift of chastity. No doubt perfection in the Christian and the religious life depends on the practice of the interior virtues; nevertheless exterior mortification still remains indispensable. The use of these two means, these two remedies, ranks first in the program of sanctity: avoid evil — and the second, which is just as important as the first: do good."

One day Father Frederic was urging us to be generous in the service of God. He explained to us the excellence of mortification and communicated his religious spirit to us: "If you do not do penance," he used to say, "you will all perish." But with what charity and prudence he interpreted that quotation from Holy Scripture! Without neglecting those physical mortifications which he practised to a heroic degree, he much preferred spiritual penances: renunciation of the mind, heart, and will. He used to say to us: "Be careful, my little novices. Do your fasting, but eat your whole portion at the evening meal. If you go too far in mortifying yourselves, later on the devil will make fun of you." And as we did not fully understand what he meant, we had quite a discussion. We wished to know how we could become a laughing-stock for the devil.

"But Father," we said, "your work is far greater than ours. You preach and at night you write books, and you eat only a potato and a little bread for lunch."

"That is true," he replied. "But my stomach is accommodating. It has gradually become used to that diet. But you must take your two ounces of bread in the morning and the entire portion that is served to you in the evening. Be careful! The devil incites novices and young priests to fast and go without sleep to an excessive degree. Then, when the time comes to work for the salvation of souls, he laughs at those who have exhausted their strength by immoderate mortification. I have seen quite a few who were never able to be of service either to the Church or to the Order because of their lack of judgment and obedience."

We felt as though we were listening to St. Francis himself recommending discretion in penance to his disciples grouped around him, as he once did in these words: "My dear sons, every-

one must practice mortification according to his constitution. Some have enough strength to live on less food than others. Nevertheless I want those who need more food not to be obliged to follow that example. Everyone must give his body what it requires, in order that it may serve the spirit. All excess in drinking and eating is bad for the body and the soul, but you must also and even more carefully avoid the kind of abstinence that is too severe. The Lord does not demand sacrifices but conversion.”⁵

Just like St. Francis, who nevertheless treated his own body very severely, Father Frederic was opposed to all excesses of austerity. This remark of the Poverello's first biographer can also be applied to him: “In this respect alone, the holy Father's conduct was in contradiction with his words.”

Among the elect souls who took the Franciscan habit while Father Frederic was assistant novice master at Brandy, we must mention Father Simon de Bussi res, as he was known in the Order, Bussi res being his birthplace. He became one of the glories of the Province of Aquitaine. His Cause of Beatification has been introduced in Rome. Father Fran ois Valadier (his original name) had first been a vicar in Arfeuilles, where he was known as a remarkably devout and apostolic priest. Then he became the chaplain of the Franciscan Sisters in Vichy. For twelve years he longed to join a religious order. On August 2, 1871, he entered the Novitiate at Brandy, and received the habit, with the name Simon, on September 13, 1871. His life was destined to be quite short but filled with numerous holy projects.

He was a model religious and a tireless missionary. He founded the Congregation of the Franciscan Sisters of the Mission. During his twelve years as a religious, he was distinguished by his humility, obedience, simplicity, zeal, and extraordinary achievements in apostolic undertakings. When the Franciscan Superiors were planning to restore the Order in Canada in 1880, their thoughts turned to him. But he died in December, 1881, barely forty years old.

If we are unable to determine the contribution of Father Frederic to the sanctification of Father Simon de Bussi res,

since they were together at Branday for only about ten weeks, we do know that the former had a great esteem for the latter, whom he later made one of his most devoted collaborators. As we shall see, they worked together in Bordeaux.

Despite the real happiness which Father Frederic enjoyed in the solitude of Branday, he did not stay there long. The peaceful and profoundly religious life that he lived in that Franciscan monastic oasis, a kind of miniature replica of the hermitages of the Fathers of the Desert, was a period of preparation for the sublime apostolic ministry of extending the Kingdom of God by preaching, for which he was destined by Divine Providence.

Chapter 7

BORDEAUX

(1871-1874)

One Sunday evening in September, 1871, the Very Rev. Father Provincial Léon de Clary returned to the Novitiate at Brandy. He announced some good news to his religious during the noontime recreation the next day:

"Yesterday I went to preside over the meeting of the Third Order in Bordeaux. The kind pastor of Sainte Eulalie, the Abbé Parenteau, asked me to visit his rectory after the ceremony. He said that he had an interesting project to submit to me. He is offering to the Franciscan Order the auxiliary chapel which he built at the end of the rue de Pessac for the Ségur neighborhood."

"That offer certainly is interesting," Father Raphael Delarbre replied forcefully. "We must not let this opportunity to make a foundation in Bordeaux slip by."

"Yes, indeed, our influence in Bordeaux would be more fruitful if we had a house there. But where will we find the funds to buy that chapel with the lot and the small house that are next to it? Because our community would need a temporary home until a monastery is built."

"If the offer comes from God," someone suggested, "Providence will make it possible in due time."

The Provincial replied with a smile to the Friar who had just spoken:

"Your supernatural spirit pleases me, Father Frederic."

The Franciscans had for a long time wished to settle in the old capital of Aquitaine, where they were already exercising a very active ministry. Braday, lost in the rich vineyards of Saint Emilion, was inaccessible. On the other hand, Bordeaux was an important city of 200,000 inhabitants, a railway and shopping center. It therefore offered undeniable advantages for preaching assignments throughout the diocese as well as for ceremonies marking the departure of missionaries for foreign countries.

On October 19, 1871, Fathers Raphael and Frederic went with a lay brother to make ready the building which was to be the new residence. Two days later Cardinal Donnet, Archbishop of Bordeaux, granted the necessary authorization, which had been requested by Father Parenteau. And on November 16, five religious from Braday inaugurated the new community: three priests (Fathers Raphael Delarbre, Frederic Janssoone, and Alphonse Marie Usse) and two lay brothers.

Father Raphael, the first superior of the new friary, was in charge of material problems, such as food, clothing, construction, and furniture. He was also the director of the *Revue Franciscaine*. Father Frederic gave all his time and talent to the ministry.

In April, 1872, the community consisted of four priests and four lay brothers.

On September 7, 1872, Father Parenteau signed a private deed yielding the chapel and lot to the Provincial and four Fathers of the Bordeaux monastery: Rev. Raphael Delarbre, Augustin Bouynot, Alphonse Marie Usse, and Frederic Janssoone.

The total cost of the real estate, chapel, grounds, and house amounted to 170,000 francs. Providentially, Mme. Josephine Gourd and her daughter Stéphanie, with several other Franciscan tertiaries, made a spontaneous and generous gift of a substantial sum to defray the expenses of the foundation.

The friary was placed under the protection of Our Lady of the Angels and of St. Joseph. It was located in a well-populated neighborhood whose inhabitants were friendly to the religious, so that alms were abundant. Father Frederic took pleasure in considering this generosity on the part of the faithful as another manifestation of the protection of Providence over the Franciscan Order through the centuries.

Because the parish church was not near, the people of the Ségur neighborhood had become somewhat lax in the practice of their religious duties. But they were fundamentally good, and it was with joy that they welcomed this missionary Order which had labored in Bordeaux for more than five centuries, i. e. from 1247 until 1790. The Franciscans had formerly been known there as *Cordeliers*. When the people saw their sandals and ash-colored habits, which were symbols of the Friars' spirit of penance and detachment, they felt a rebirth of their old admiration for them, and they therefore gave them a cordial welcome. So many of the faithful crowded into the church of Our Lady of the Angels for the conventual Mass and Vespers each Sunday that the chapel was too small to contain them all.

Father Frederic enjoyed his task of instructing these people who were eager to hear the word of God because they had so long hungered for it. For him, preaching, far from being a burden, was an ideal opportunity, which he very often sought, of sharing with others the thoughts and longings which he had difficulty in keeping to himself. He was glad to speak about God and to spread the flame of the love of God from his heart to others.

His sermons were more like informal talks than models of oratory. He rarely launched into thundering denunciations of the vices and horrors of the world. In a very simple way he explained the spirit of religion and of the Gospel, making a clear distinction between purely human virtues and those that are truly Christlike. The people of the Ségur neighborhood, who were somewhat forsaken yet still believers, being

tired from having labored too much for the world, were very happy to discover or rediscover the supernatural truths of religion. They felt that they were in the presence of a man of God.

Above all he invited those select souls, the Franciscan Tertiaries, to enjoy the loftiest heights of the supernatural in the school of the saints. In a series of articles which appeared in the *Revue Franciscaine* of Bordeaux from February to November, 1871, he had offered to his Tertiary brothers and sisters the example of one of their most remarkable precursors, Jeanne Marie de Maillé. At the end of 1871 he revised and published these articles in a booklet entitled *Vie de la Bienheureuse Jeanne Marie de Maillé*. In the foreword he summarized for his readers of the Third Order the qualities which earned a place among the Church's nobility of holiness for that Franciscan Tertiary, whose centuries-old public cult was formally confirmed by Pope Pius IX on April 27, 1871. Father Frederic wrote:

Blessed Jeanne Marie de Maillé was a perfect follower of our Seraphic Father, the Patriarch of Assisi. She will also be a perfect model for you. She was in turn a young girl, wife, and widow, rich by birth, poor by vocation, of a noble family yet still nobler by her virtues, constantly tried by Divine Providence and always resigned under the blows of misfortune, often misunderstood or even despised by her relatives and contemporaries, but favored by God and showered with supernatural gifts. That was Jeanne Marie de Maillé, Baroness of Silly. That is the new protectress whom the immortal Pius IX has just given to France and to the Franciscan Order.

In Bordeaux Father Frederic continued — and he was to do so later for many years in the Holy Land and in Canada — to contribute numerous articles to the *Revue Franciscaine*, as he had begun with the life of Blessed Jeanne Marie de Maillé. Many anonymous articles which appeared in that magazine can be attributed with plausibility to him. In this connection, Father Hugolin Lemay, O.F.M., noted in his *Bibliographie* of Father Frederic's writings:

Father Frederic wrote a great deal in certain periodicals, beginning with the *Revue Franciscaine* of Bordeaux in 1871... I attempted to identify all these items. I admit that I did not succeed. I am convinced that many anonymous articles in the *Revue Franciscaine* of Bordeaux between the years 1871 and 1880 were written by Father Frederic. But it is impossible for me to prove it.

He therefore offered his collaboration during the very first years of the *Revue Franciscaine*. Father Léon de Clary had decided, when he was Provincial, to replace the *Année Franciscaine*, published in Bolbec, by the *Revue Franciscaine*, as a bulletin of the Third Order of St. Francis. The first issue of the latter, printed in Paris by Tolra and Haton, appeared in August, 1870. But the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War obliged it to move its office to Bordeaux. The next issue appeared there in February, 1871.

Beginning in November, as a supplement to the magazine, a series of inexpensive religious brochures known as *L'Oeuvre Franciscaine* was published. Their apostolic goal was the spread of good reading and good ideas to effect a renewal of the Christian spirit wherever their influence might make itself felt, by making the Third Order and the spirit of St. Francis more widely known.

This campaign for Franciscan literature opened with the publication of Father Frederic's life of Blessed Jeanne Marie de Maillé. The booklet was sent gratis to all the subscribers of the magazine. It served to prepare its readers' hearts and minds for some great celebrations.

For a few months later the *Revue Franciscaine* summoned all the Fraternities of the Third Order to celebrate at the end of April, 1872, a solemn triduum in honor of Blessed Jeanne Marie. The aim of this crusade of prayers was to obtain through the intercession of the recently beatified Tertiary the triumph of the Church which was then undergoing grievous trials, the liberation of the captive Pius IX, and an increase of the spirit of faith in France, which was still troubled by the events of 1870. The magazine's suggestion was adopted.

At Tours, the home of Blessed Jeanne Marie's family, the celebrations were particularly impressive: several archbishops and bishops attended, and the eloquent Bishop Pie of Poitiers gave the eulogy.

At Bordeaux, in the Franciscan Church of Our Lady of the Angels, there was also a triduum on the first anniversary of the decree of Beatification, i.e. on April 25, 26, and 27, 1872. Father Frederic organized it. On all three days, but especially during the evening services, a recollected crowd pressed into the church and prayed before a beautiful picture of Blessed Jeanne Marie encircled by an aureole of bright lights. The church had never been so well decorated, thanks to the efforts of some devout parishioners and sisters of the Third Order. A sermon honoring the worthy daughter of St. Francis of Assisi was given each day by a Jesuit, a Carmelite, and a Dominican priest, respectively.

In December, 1872, the Minister General of the Order of Friars Minor, the Very Rev. Father Bernardino of Portogruaro, came to France. After his election in 1869, he had already visited several Franciscan provinces in Italy, Germany, Austria, and England. He was a man of exceptional ability, and he was to govern the Order for twenty years. After having made the canonical visitation of the Province of Saint Louis, he presided over the Provincial Chapter which was held at Bourges on February 6, 1873. Father Raphael Delarbre d'Aurillac, the superior of the friary at Bordeaux, was elected Provincial, although he was not yet thirty years old. Father Frederic was his logical successor as superior in Bordeaux. He had now been a priest for three years. He accepted this assignment purely out of obedience, or rather with fear and trembling. As he held the austere Rule of St. Francis in very high esteem, and as it is in itself a very lofty religious ideal, he wondered whether he would have sufficient charity, prudence, and zeal to fill his new position. He had the saintly Father Simon de Bussières as his Vicar or assistant.

The Provincial Chapter of Bourges also recognized Father Frederic's ability as a preacher, for it appointed him a preacher and confessor at the disposition of the Provincial.

Intense modesty must nevertheless not extinguish the spirit of submission toward God and His representatives. Father Frederic therefore immediately set to work. He found himself at the head of an establishment which was rather large for those times. The foundation of the *Seraphic Collège* (preparatory school or minor seminary) had taken place at the same time as that of the Bordeaux friary.

This school, which had begun modestly at Brandy in 1872, was transferred during the following year to a building next to the new friary. It served to recruit boys who gave serious evidence of having a religious and a Franciscan vocation, as well as to recruit missionaries for France and the Holy Places.

As the French government had for centuries exercised a protectorate over the Catholic missionaries in Palestine, once Father Frederic was promoted to be superior of the Bordeaux friary, he lost no time in suggesting to the Very Rev. Father Raphael that he request from the government a subsidy in favor of the boys who were later to represent as apostles abroad both their religion and their country.

The government congratulated the Franciscans and encouraged the new project, for it grasped the importance of maintaining in the Near East the good name and prestige of France. The Duc de Broglie, as minister of foreign affairs, manifested the government's favorable interest by sending a first appropriation of three thousand francs.

For the time being, the little *Seraphic Collège* of Bordeaux enjoyed a measure of prosperity. It also received numerous vocations. Among its first recruits were two boys who later, as Franciscan Fathers Charles Cauret and Léonce Mazet, when interviewed concerning their first years in the school, recalled with gratitude the kindly interest which Father Frederic had showed toward them.

During his period as superior, Father Frederic strove to spread through all classes of society the spirit of St. Francis, especially by the Third Order. The Franciscan chronicles of those years stress his work and his zeal: "Father Frederic, who was today (February 6, 1873) appointed superior of the friary in Bordeaux, has agreed to take charge of the Third Order, and he is devoting to it that limitless zeal which he knows so well how to apply to all his assignments."

His apostolate for the Third Order was so enlightened and so persevering that we shall make it the subject of an entire chapter.

However, his great method of the apostolate in Bordeaux, especially during his period as superior, his great means to reawaken faith among the people was to institute a series of outstanding religious ceremonies. The chronicles of events in the *Revue Franciscaine* of Bordeaux mention such popular gatherings at the Franciscan church on the rue de Pessac only during the time when Father Frederic was superior.

This friar was gifted with a grasp of popular psychology. Conducting religious celebrations which make a deep impression on crowds and leave an unforgettable memory in minds and hearts was a specialty in which he excelled, as we shall see when describing his years in the Holy Land, in Canada, and above all at Cap de la Madeleine. Formally organized events, with even the slightest details foreseen in advance, were not so much to his liking. For him, the success of a celebration consisted less in its technical presentation than in the harmony of voices and hearts, less in a tasteful arrangement of decorations than in a numerous and recollected congregation.

On August 2, 1873, the Feast of the Portiuncula, which was the patronal feast of the Franciscan church in Bordeaux, attracted a crowd that was estimated at the astounding figure of twenty-five thousand visitors. An eye-witness reported that "beginning on the Vigil, throngs of people continued to crowd into the church like the waves of a rising tide." On the Feast

Day, "one Mass followed another from four o'clock in the morning until noon. The communion rail was besieged, literally congested. During and after the Holy Sacrifice, two Friars were not sufficient to bring the Bread of the Strong to the crowds; more than four thousand hosts were distributed on those two days."¹

Throughout the Feast Day, religious or lay congregations and societies succeeded one another at frequent intervals. The number of groups that came to receive the Portiuncula Indulgence either as a body or represented by a delegation reached twenty-seven. Never in the memory of living men had Bordeaux seen such a manifestation.

Father Frederic's vicar, Father Simon de Bussièrès, followed the practice in use at Lourdes for the arrival of pilgrimages by going to meet the groups as they entered the rue de Pessac marching in a procession.

Hour after hour, alternating with the vicar, Father Frederic would appear in the pulpit. By his words and prayers he stimulated the devotion of the people and directed their hearts toward God. He taught each of them how to expiate his faults, bear his daily cross, and pray for the souls in Purgatory.

Later, when he was in Canada, it is a known fact that on the vigil and the day of the Portiuncula Feast he would spend almost the entire day in the pulpit leading the prayers, explaining the Indulgence, inspiring the right dispositions in the faithful, and inducing them by his stirring example to make a number of visits, which they continued to repeat until quite late at night. Those days of prayer were unforgettable to the fortunate persons who participated in them at the Forges de Saint Maurice near Trois-Rivières, in the Perpetual Adoration Chapel of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary in Quebec, or in the Franciscan churches in Montreal and Trois-Rivières. In 1899 he even published a booklet on the Portiuncula Indulgence in order to make it better known. But it was in Bordeaux that he began to spread devotion for that precious In-

dulgence, which was then unknown to many people, including very devout Catholics. However, in Bordeaux as in Canada, this extraordinary upsurge of public favor for the Portiuncula Indulgence was not destined to be maintained. Yet the private devotion of many individuals continued to receive a stimulus from it and survived as a result of the impulse given by Father Frederic.

After that memorable day of August 2, 1873, the chronicler of the *Revue Franciscaine* could not prevent himself from writing enthusiastically:

That was a day we shall never forget, a day when our only regret was to see its end. We reproached the setting sun for taking away with it for one year the great favor of the Portiuncula, and as though to avenge ourselves, we prolonged our prayers until nightfall, so hard was it for us to leave Our Lady of the Angels!

On the morrow and for several days, the 15th, 16th, 17th, and 29th of August, and on September 8th, pilgrimages continued to come to the blessed Shrine of Our Lady of the Angels. As superior of the Bordeaux friary, Father Frederic encouraged and stimulated these manifestations of popular devotion. What he wanted was crowds of praying people. He continued to organize similar celebrations, yet he never duplicated the occasions. Each time new circumstances contributed a new element.

Missionaries on their way to the Americas often spent several days at the friary in Bordeaux before their steamer sailed. A number of departure ceremonies had already been conducted there: twenty-seven Franciscan missionaries sailed on October 1, 1872; one later that month; and four in April, 1873. Finally, on August 29, 1873, the faithful had the pleasure of attending a departure ceremony for eighteen French, Austrian, and Italian Franciscan missionaries bound for South America.

This last ceremony, which was organized by Father Frederic as superior of the friary, was so impressive and

stirring that it assumed all the marks of a historic religious event. It was so important and made such a deep impression on the religious life of the city that the *Revue Franciscaine* devoted three articles to it during the year 1873.

It seemed as though the whole town of Bordeaux, which in its southern climate is as rich in flowers as in wines, contributed to the splendid floral decorations of the Franciscan church as a gracious gesture which typified its faith and generosity.

Several days before the event, printed announcements disclosed that the ceremony would take place at three o'clock in the afternoon. But even at one o'clock the church was already filled with people of all classes. It was reported that some of them had travelled up to six miles in order to be present, and even that some others who never set foot inside a church came and gave every indication of being deeply moved.

The religious celebrations of all sorts occurring in Bordeaux and the various pilgrimages that were spreading throughout France were re-awakening the spirit of faith in all classes of society. And that rebirth of faith was giving the French nation back its soul.

After the signing of the humiliating Treaty of Frankfurt, France arose with courage from its ruins. "The noble wounded man" — according to the stirring and widely popular expression used by the statesman Thiers in Bordeaux itself in 1871 — quickly arose from the ground where he lay, and set about healing his wounds and gathering his strength. From the autumn of 1871, the entire nation threw itself into the work of reconstruction. It quickly organized a powerful army and collected the millions of francs which were to deliver it from the German occupation. Confidence revived, and patriotism was implemented by the influence of religion. It was from this resurgence of faith that sprang the "new era" hailed by Pius IX, the era of fervent pilgrimages to La Salette, Lourdes, and Rome. It was that twofold conviction of patriotism and

religion that inspired the first consecration of France to the Sacred Heart which was made at the Shrine of Paray le Monial in the spring of 1873.² It was then too that the Catholic people of France took the vow which resulted in the construction of the great Basilica in Montmartre, that impressive monument which was an affirmation of the nation's Catholic faith and of its consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the true King of France, as St. Joan of Arc called Him.

In this connection, the Rev. Othon de Pavie, O.F.M., wrote:

This movement of religious revival was also evident, in a much more humble yet moving way, in the recent Franciscan foundations. In Bordeaux, crowds flocked to the ceremonies in the Franciscan Church of Our Lady of the Angels. The same enthusiasm was shown by the very Christian and likable people of Pau. True Christians were overjoyed to see the poverty of Francis of Assisi re-appear among them, and they were eager to practise charity toward the Friars who lived it and whose simplicity made them extremely popular everywhere.³

The friary in Bordeaux was only one year old when the Very Rev. Father Provincial Léon de Clary was already thanking God for the good accomplished by his Friars: "Every day," he wrote in his circular letter of June 20, 1872, "we observe the good that this new foundation is already accomplishing and which it will later be able to accomplish even more... During the Easter season numerous returns to the Sacraments filled us with consolation."⁴

In Bordeaux, due to his spirit of poverty, his great simplicity, his apostolic zeal, and his ability in organizing beautiful religious ceremonies, Father Frederic was becoming a most docile and efficient instrument of Providence and one of the most popular workers in the general re-awakening of faith. When he was promoted to be the superior of the friary, he was ably assisted in this supernatural task by Father Simon de Bussièrès. The latter's biographer paid this tribute to the holy rivalry of these two apostles:

The Friary at Bordeaux was governed at that time by the Rev. Father Frederic of Ghyvelde, a young religious who had a promising future and who was destined to die only in 1916, burdened with years and merits, leaving behind him the reputation of a true saint. Father Frederic and Father Simon enjoyed a perfect mutual understanding. Their hearts were equally consumed by the love of God and zeal for souls.

However, Father Frederic did not remain superior of the Bordeaux friary for long. He was unable to overcome the fears which his responsibilities aroused in him. He became absorbed in a struggle against his natural weaknesses. He was in conflict with himself. The saints have never been persons without feelings and inner conflicts. They have never found sanctity in their cradles, as crown princes inherit their royal destiny. Nevertheless their good will, rooted in God, has remained inflexible and never resigned itself to mediocrity, even if in the end it had to accept humbly the painful and inevitable contrast between the life they had dreamed of as children of God and the life they actually lived as human beings. Frequently God left them with a natural fault or inability in order to keep them humble.

Father Frederic was a valuable collaborator and an unequalled spiritual model for souls of good will, but he was not made to be a leader or superior. His ability to carry out orders was greater than his ability to give them. In his case the saying was true that "he who is not brilliant in the first rank shines in the second."

On several occasions he wished to give up his assignment as superior because he considered himself incapable of fulfilling it. He was convinced that one's salvation was in far greater danger when commanding than when obeying.

His own testimony gives us a very poor idea of his administration. Once he confided to Father Mathieu-M. Daunais, O.F.M.: "Twice I corrected someone in public, and later I realized that I would have done better to have remained silent."

Two documents which were found in the archives of the Order's headquarters in Rome furnish an irrefutable proof of his lack of ability to exercise authority. One report, dated May 24, 1873, is from Father Paul du Sacré Coeur, master of scholastics in Bourges: "In Bordeaux, Father Frederic is torturing his conscience over matters for which he is not blamed." A letter from the Very Rev. Father Raphael to the Minister General Bernardino da Portogruaro reveals how deep Father Frederic's discouragement was. It was serious, like a chronic illness.

I am once more obliged to turn to you, Most Reverend Father, this time regarding several matters in the Province. First, my greatest problem at present is the superior in Bordeaux. Good Father Frederic has already offered his resignation to me three or four times; hitherto I have always refused it. But he is insisting, and despite all the reasons which I have been able to explain to him, I can clearly see that he cannot adjust himself to being a superior. His timid and over-scrupulous conscience makes him suffer a great deal, is also embarrassing to the other religious in the community, and makes the situation difficult for everyone. He has gone so far as to tell me that if I do not accept his resignation, he would leave the Order and withdraw to a Carthusian monastery. My problem is that just now I have **no one** to take his place. I know very well that you, Most Rev. Father General, will not be able to send me a Superior from heaven; but it is already a consolation to me to communicate my troubles to you, and as you are more enlightened than I am, you will perhaps be able to give me some helpful advice.⁵

The Chapter held in the Bordeaux friary in July, 1874, announced some changes in the nominations which had been made by the Provincial Chapter of February 6, 1873. Among these changes mentioned in the *Revue Franciscaine*, we find that of the superior in Bordeaux: the new superior was the Very Rev. Father Léon de Clary, former Provincial and Guardian. Father Frederic was named librarian of the friary and editor of the *Revue Franciscaine*, although he did not take up the duties of the second assignment: Father Irenée d'Orléans was later made editor.

During 1875, Father Frederic preached retreats with Father Bernard d'Orléans in the diocese of Bordeaux or in the neighboring dioceses. This Father Bernard, who initiated him into the art of giving parish retreats, was an original and inspiring preacher, one of those great missionaries who are unusually apostolic for the salvation of souls and zealous in the confessional. He followed the methods which Father Areso had taught in his *Manuel du Missionnaire* and which had formerly been used by St. Alphonsus Liguori and St. Leonard of Porto Maurizio. Father Frederic once disclosed that Father Bernard had told him to remain kneeling in the sanctuary throughout a sermon, in order to ask God for the conversion of certain sinners who were resisting the graces of the retreat.

Father Bernard's way of preaching appealed to Father Frederic and taught him how to make his own sermons more effective. Father Bernard's sermons were popular and filled with that unction which made St. Bernard famous and known as "the honey-sweet Doctor." He was gifted by nature with zest and the ability to dramatize his subjects. Under the inspiration of his great zeal, his fervent heart uttered words that were inspired, burning, and capable of melting the ice in the coldest souls. A mission which he preached in 1856 with Father Jean Baptiste de Beauvais in Bolbec, a town of 10,000 inhabitants in Normandy, remained celebrated. So deep was the impression that it made and so numerous were the conversions which it effected that a vicar of that city recorded the event in a book.

Father Bernard d'Orléans had spent many years in the Holy Land. He had been the first French religious after the Revolution to leave, in 1859, for the missions in Palestine, and he had been the founder and director of the boys' school in Aleppo. After a period of distinguished service in the Holy Land, his health obliged him to return to France. As soon as he recovered his strength, he began to preach again. We can well imagine that he frequently talked about the land of Jesus

Christ on these preaching tours with his companion, who was so eager to discuss spiritual subjects.

It was in this way that bit by bit a persistent dream from the past took on more precise shape in Father Frederic's soul.

Chapter 8

A BEAUTIFUL DREAM COMES TRUE

(1876)

On the very last day of April, 1876, the Minister General of the Order of Friars Minor received the following letter:

Very Reverend Father General,

I have always had the most intense desire to visit the Holy Places, and I would consider it a great favor to remain there for six years, under the usual conditions. Father Martin is leaving in a few days. Very Reverend Father, you would fulfill my dearest desire if you were to deign to send me an obedience to leave with him. There is perhaps a project to make me some kind of superior in France. Very Reverend Father, you know me well, and I can tell you everything: the mere thought of being a superior makes me almost crazy with fear. Please, Very Reverend Father, spare me from the fulfilment of that fear and remove all my doubts by sending me to the Holy Land, where the Very Reverend Father Custos can do whatever he wishes with me.

I therefore dare to await, with complete confidence, my obedience for the Holy Land, with your Seraphic Blessing. Believe me as ever, Very Reverend Father, your most humble and submissive child in J. M. J. F.

When he wrote this letter on April 26, 1876, Father Fred-eric was residing in the friary at 83 rue des Fourneaux in Paris, where he was librarian and was working in the Commissariat of the Holy Land. As a result of the death of the Commissary, the Reverend Fulgence Rignon, O.F.M., he had even been in charge of the office for some time in November. Furthermore, for the past three months, with two other Fathers, he had

been helping Father Marcellino da Civezza in the compilation of his monumental history of Franciscan missions, on which the author had already spent twenty years. With the insatiable eagerness of a true researcher, Father Frederic was devoting himself in the great *Bibliothèque Nationale* to a fruitful study of history, particularly that of the early missions in Canada. This was a remote and providential preparation for the time when he was to become the first Commissary of the Holy Land in Canada. By studying the historical documents that described the labors and efforts of the former Recollect Franciscans to enkindle the light of faith in Canada, Father Frederic developed an intense affection for that country.

Father Martin Andrieu, who is mentioned in the letter, was Vicar of the friary in Paris and had already served as a missionary in Palestine. It was no doubt he who advised Father Frederic to submit a formal request to be sent there, knowing that he was thereby fulfilling a profound longing which was also in harmony with the wishes of religious and lay authorities.

We cannot determine the precise origin of Father Frederic's Holy Land vocation. It seems to go back to his childhood. It is certain that a love for the Holy Places had been inspired and stimulated in his soul by the encouragement and the repeated appeals of his superiors in favor of the missions and of Palestine in particular, as well as by the frequent articles and news reports appearing in the Franciscan magazines of those years, and by his personal contacts with the Commissariat of the Holy Land and with Fathers Bernard, Martin, and Marcellino.

A quite recent development had seemed to him like a voice from heaven, although before he heard it the message had to travel by a circuitous route through the channels of French foreign policy. In September, 1875, the French consul in Jerusalem had sounded an alarm, which was then transmitted by the government in Paris to the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith and to the Minister General

of the Order of Friars Minor in Rome, and finally to the two Franciscan Provincials in France. The problem was to ensure the succession of two French Friars to the positions of Vicar Custodial and of Counsellor on the Council of the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land, which were about to fall vacant.

On February 4, 1876, the Duc Decazes, the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Paris, had written to the Very Reverend Father Raphael Delarbre, Provincial of France, in order to explain to him the needs of the Custody of the Holy Land and to request him to have at least two Friars ready to leave at very short notice. Father Martin Andrieu had been selected, and he was due to become Vicar Custodial when the position was open. The second friar, however, could not be found by diplomatic means.

It was in these circumstances that on April 26, 1876, Father Frederic asked to be sent to Palestine. As the Custos of the Holy Land was in urgent need of a French priest for the boys' school in Aleppo — despite the pleas of Father Raphael to the Father General to retain Father Frederic in France as Secretary of the Province ("a position for which he has many qualifications," the Provincial pleaded) — the Minister General made a final decision: "It is necessary that Father Frederic leave for Jerusalem" and on April 29, he mailed the obedience which the latter had requested.

Father Frederic received it on the morning of May 4, 1876. Without delay, he bade farewell to the community of the friary, as well as to Father Marcellino and his two collaborators. The Italian priest was very sorry to see Father Frederic leave. Twice in his writings he paid a stirring tribute to the valuable assistance and the edification which Father Frederic had given him. The following sentences are excerpts from both passages:

During all the time that I remained in Paris, he was my favorite companion in the tiring research which I had to do in the *Bibliothèque Nationale*. With intelligence and zeal and real affection, he gave me so much help that nothing I write can ever

express my gratitude. I was preparing to leave for Spain when he received his obedience for the Holy Land mission from the Very Reverend Father General. The separation gave me great sorrow.¹

Father Frederic left Paris for Palestine on May 9, 1876.

In a long and interesting letter to the Very Reverend Father Raphael, Provincial in France, which was published in the *Revue Franciscaine* of Bordeaux from May, 1877, to September, 1882, he described his journey from Paris to Jerusalem.

At Narbonne, he joined his traveling companion, Father Martin, who had been visiting his family there.

In the south of France, which is known as a "land of generosity, warm hearts, and poetic souls," Father Frederic received a cordial welcome from the Capuchins who give the Friars the same hospitality which the Franciscans of Bordeaux extend to the Capuchin missionaries who sail from there to the Americas.

Father Frederic's manuscript notes contain numerous personal details regarding his brief stay in Marseille, especially in connection with its reminders of his brother Pierre, who was a missionary at Bangalore in India.

Following the example of all the missionaries on their way to the Orient, Father Frederic went to place himself under the protection of Notre-Dame de la Garde, the good Mother of sailors and the great Patroness of missionaries. He too went to pray to her whom "his brother Pierre had invoked when leaving for his distant mission."

In Marseille Father Frederic had visited a family of his acquaintance in which the mother, a benefactress of the Friars Minor, and her three children were grieving over the recent death of the head of the family, who had been a man of unusual merit and great charity and who was mourned by the entire city. At half-past four on the morning of May 16, wearing his missionary's crucifix on his chest, Father Frederic, accompanied by this lady, Mme. Boyer, and her son and older

daughter, climbed the steep and abrupt stairway up the rocky hill where the famous neo-byzantine Shrine, with its square tower supporting the enormous statue of Notre-Dame de la Garde, rises, while its black and white outlines are sharply sketched against the gentle blue of the sky. He said his Mass at the main altar of the church of "the Good Mother," as the people of Marseille affectionately call their Patroness. Devout pilgrims can visit and admire at their leisure the magnificent church and its treasures of art.

Before descending, Father Frederic contemplated from that splendid site all of Marseille and its hills, islands, and the Mediterranean. From the Old Port, the town extends along the bay and proudly spreads over its hills in its exuberant vitality. When it awakens to the hustle and bustle and noise of a new day, in the dazzling light of the sun, it offers all the liveliness of great southern cities and all the power and vitality of an industrial, maritime, and commercial metropolis. On this radiant May morning, the sun shed its warm rays over the sea of red roofs, the chalky grey of the hills, and through a maze of ships, masts, yardarms, and ropes, and over the three grayish islands in the bay. Then, beyond the *Ile du Planier* with its white lighthouse, there was the luminous blue of the open sea.

Father Frederic found the site of Notre Dame de la Garde magnificent: "standing majestically and benignly on her rock, she dominates both the city and the sea." He wished that the coast of his native Flanders had a similar Patroness, and he noted in his diary: "When will the people of Dunkerque (the land of missionaries) also see the Blessed Virgin dominate both the town and the sea and turn toward England a face that is more gracious and yet more awesome than the sword and boots of Jean Bart?"

While he was contemplating the harbor of Marseille, the gate to the Orient and the Far East, a heart-warming memory of ten years before brought tears to his eyes: it was on July 17, 1866, that his older brother Pierre had sailed from Marseille on

the steamer *Péluse* to consecrate his life to the conversion of the Hindus of Mysore.

Father Frederic had the holy ambition of imitating his brother, who was serving God as a real apostle among the Indians. With admiration he recalled the heroic thoughts which Pierre wrote to him in a letter dated April 4, 1868: "The more I work and the more I suffer for my dark-skinned Christians, the more I love them. I would rather have my heart torn out than to be torn away from these poor people." He also recalled the naive exclamation which he used to utter when among his intimate friends: "Oh, if I could bring about the conversion of this little (Coorg) Kingdom, I would die from joy!" And in order to win these people for Christ, Father Pierre Janssoone applied himself to learning several of the numerous difficult languages and dialects of India: "As for me, since arriving here, besides English (which I knew a bit), I have already put into my poor little memory Tamil, Canara, Telegu, Hindustani, Konkani — I am now learning my sixth language."

Later, when on board ship sailing to the Holy Land, Father Frederic wrote the following heartfelt lines concerning his brother and himself:

When that missionary, like a real spoiled child of God, wrote those moving words which we have just recorded, he no doubt had no idea that ten years later, on this same sea at the same time of day, another poor child of an unknown village in a corner of France, standing on the aft deck of the steamer would experience the same emotions; that this child, the last of thirteen, all raised by their virtuous mother in the fear of the Lord, would also sail across the sea to the shores of the Orient in order to give his labor and perspiration and perhaps his blood for the salvation of souls; and that this new missionary, a poor pilgrim to the Holy Land, would be his own younger brother. O my beloved brother, I hold out my hand to you across the world: let us remain united in the charity of Jesus Christ, and let us save souls — you amid your little Coorg people whom you love, where heaven promises you a rich harvest, and I in this land of marvels which is today a land of desolation where conversions are, alas, all too rare! No, no, do not tell me again what you wrote in your last letter, 'I am studying

my sixth language, and I hope that it will be the last one.' Let us never say: this is enough. In working for souls we must say: more, Lord, more! ²

From Marseille, Father Frederic pursued his journey with his companion through Nice, the Riviera, and Genoa, "one of the most charming regions in the world," he noted. "On one side there is the blue sea which wafts toward us a pleasantly cool breeze, and on the other side there are delightful gardens filled with freshly blossoming flowers whose sweet scents perfume the atmosphere. It is a real paradise on earth."

He was an observant traveler; he noted the poetic and original aspects of the scenery. He visited the principal civic and religious monuments and especially the famous shrines, which he often described in his notes, with any data that pertained to the Saints. In a few words, like a guide speaking to foreign tourists, he summed up the history of a town or the account of an event. His notes are a combination of facts concerning classical antiquities with religious reflections, supernatural meditations, and amusing personal remarks.

As a special favor, Father Frederic had permission to go through Italy on his way to the Holy Land. At Porto Maurizio our two missionaries sent a spiritual greeting to St. Leonard of Porto Maurizio (1676-1751) and said "a fervent prayer to the great converter of souls of the last century."

On May 19, they were in Florence, "the city of flowers," "the home of the Medici," a town that is famous for its picturesque scenery, the magnificence of its monuments, and the high quality of the art in its museums. However, our two travelers' stay in Florence was spoiled by rain and above all by an unpleasant incident which was quite banal and rather amusing in itself, but which almost had serious consequences.

Father Frederic was rightly known for his ability as a story teller. We will therefore let him relate this anecdote in his own words: they will demonstrate that ability, with the seasoning of some humor. His account also reveals another

aspect of his vivacious soul, for it contains an example of his humility and of his will to take advantage of the smallest circumstances in his life in order to resemble somewhat his Seraphic Father, St. Francis.

Situated in a plain, surrounded by hills covered to half their altitude by rich vegetation (according to a writer who was both a tourist and a pilgrim), Florence is like a pearl in the calix of a flower whose petals, though fresh at their base, are faded at the top. But even if I should incur the anger of all the people of Florence, I must say that that illustrious flower showed us only the tops of its petals: speaking quite plainly, our day in Florence was the most unhappy one of our whole trip. In order to enjoy one's stay in a town, one must be free — but we were deprived of our freedom on entering the city!

What happened? While Mme. de Sevigné would no doubt have described the adventure with many a literary frill and flourish, I will narrate it, Very Reverend Father, in all its prosaic simplicity. The whole incident revolves around a poor little snuff container which a benefactress in Paris had given to Father M[artin] for his personal use during this journey. When we faithfully showed it to the customs inspector at the frontier, he courteously left it in the hands of its user. As we were leaving the station, a policeman who was in the service of the municipal toll office put his hand in our suitcases and found the unfortunate snuff container. It was right there, unconcealed: a clear sign that we did not intend to defraud the revenue authorities. Nevertheless our policeman-customs agent seized it, despite the most lively protest on the part of the Father. As I did not know Italian, I was forced to remain passive. The tobacco was taken to the revenue office, where it was sniffed, fingered, measured, and weighed. Then an endless coming and going of officials began, though we greatly desired that it would come to an end very soon. I had been up since six in the morning of the day before, and had spent a very unpleasant night on the train. It was now 8:30 a.m. We wished to say Mass, and to visit as soon as possible a friend of Father Marcellino da Civezza [Cesare Guasti], who was to give us a brotherly welcome. Finally we set out — but do you know how? Escorted by our policeman, like two felons [sic]. Thus we had to go through the "city of flowers!" My companion was a former officer who had fought in the Crimean campaign — how his military blood must have boiled in his veins! But now he was wearing the habit of a humble Friar, who must be meek and mild. When we reached the main police station, we were

kept waiting again for a good hour! After due thought, Father M. remained alone and sent me to Via dei Preti, no. 6. When I arrived, no one was there. The two priests who were collaborators of Father Marcellino [Fathers Pedro del Belmonte and Raphael] had gone to the library, and the Brother was out getting vegetables. However, the good Brother came back and took me to the parish church, where I said Mass. It was eleven o'clock. On my return, I found my traveling companion. The indictment had been prepared, he told me: it meant a fine of 60 to 70 francs, the loss of the snuff, and perhaps.... We wanted to lodge a complaint with our Consul. How could two harmless travelers, two French citizens provided with diplomatic passports, if you please, be treated in such a way by a nation that claimed to be an ally of France! This was a humiliation for which we should insist on justice, in our opinion, in the opinion of everyone — yes, everyone except our good Father St. Francis who had already ruled that we should bear our humiliation without complaining, like true sons of holy humility. For now, following the kind advice of a good Canon, we began to tramp down endlessly long streets in a pouring rain in order to reach the Consulate. There we were told that the Consul was in his new residence, and it was far away. Father M., who was exhausted, gave up the idea of going there: this meant that we were giving up all our rights and therefore humbly accepting our misfortune. Finally, we went to a government ministry, which was on our way, to ask the opinion of an important personage whose address we had. This high official said to us in a friendly way: "Fathers, as the indictment has been drawn up, the trial will have to take place. You are supposed to appear before the court to plead your case. Do you want to avoid all that unpleasantness? Leave the city as soon as you can! When your names are called in court, the answer will be, **Absent!** And that will be that."

We chose this plan, which was both the humblest and the safest.... Farewell, beautiful monuments, magnificent art galleries containing so many masterpieces, farewell, you marvels of the City of the Arts — you will not receive our visit... Farewell also to you, unlucky little snuff container, the unwitting author of all this misfortune, and therefore deserving our profound condolences rather than our reproaches. Poor little container, now, when you leave the main police station, you run the risk of falling into the hands of some obscure profanator.

However, we really must see some of the beautiful sights of Florence, some of the magnificence of its twenty-seven churches, its nineteen public palaces and private mansions. We really must

visit at least some of its twelve splendid art galleries, if only to be able to say, "I too have seen them!" We must admire some of the one hundred and seventy public monuments and statues that stand on its seventeen squares like masterpieces of sculpture. We must at least go up the stairs of the famous Laurentian Library, if only to see a fourth-century codex of Virgil and two manuscripts of Tacitus.³

Venturing into the still pouring rain, Father Frederic barely had time for a hasty visit with Father Pedro del Belmonte to the *Duomo* (Cathedral) of *Santa Maria del Fiore* and to two other famous shrines. On the way, they paid their respects to Signore Cesare Guasti, the famous director of the National Archives and Franciscan writer, who was an intimate friend of Father Marcellino and whose Cause of Beatification has reached the Roman Process. This man of letters, who was one of the foremost scholars of the time, would have facilitated the visit of our two Holy Land pilgrims to the art galleries and museums and all the other public monuments if the "nasty little incident of the snuff container" had not occurred. Father Frederic gave him a letter of recommendation from Father Marcellino, which was found in a Florentine library in 1939. It reads as follows:

My dear Cesarino,

I am introducing to you two Franciscans from the Observant Province of Saint Louis of France: the future Vicar of the Holy Land, Father Martin, and his companion, Father Frederic of Dunkerque. They would like to make your acquaintance and to greet you. Father Frederic has been my right arm in my work on the history of the missions in Paris, and his departure is a grievous loss to me. I had a real angel from heaven with me. I am sure that in giving him an affectionate welcome, you will receive special blessings from God and from St. Francis. Father Frederic has a goodness about him that is utterly angelical, and he has the courtesy of an angel, together with great intelligence. With your help, he would like to know something about Florence. All the kindness which you exercise toward him will be done to myself. Farewell, dear Cesare. Give my greetings to your good and holy family, and do not forget me in your prayers, as I always remember you in mine.

Your devoted Father Marcellino.

Paris, May 8, 1876.

At the bottom of the letter, the recipient noted:

Received May 19, 1876, from Father Frederic. ⁴

A few days later, after Father Frederic had contemplated all the marvels of Mount Alverna and filled his soul with the spirit of his Seraphic stigmatized Father, St. Francis, he was glad that the humiliation which he had experienced during the unpleasant incident of the snuff container had given him some degree of resemblance to his Seraphic Father, as that was the highest aspiration of his heart. He admitted with good humor:

Now that we have contemplated all these marvels, we no longer regret having missed the material beauty of Florence, its museums and art galleries, not even its famous portrait hall, the only one in the world, where with an aristocratic pride it exhibits to visitors a collection of self-portraits of all the great painters. And now we wholeheartedly forgive it for the actions of its policemen as well as for the disappointing advice of its high officials. Besides, let us add for the record, that experience gave us a slight resemblance to our Seraphic Father. Did not St. Francis also undergo a certain annoyance in Florence? He was hastening through the town on his way to France, when he was stopped by the Cardinal Protector who was then in the city. The Cardinal opposed his project. The Saint tried to reason with him, but His Eminence remained inflexible. Francis humbly submitted... ⁵

From Florence, Father Frederic journeyed to the shrines of Mount Alverna and Assisi. He who was to become a popular biographer of St. Francis observed "everything eagerly and in detail." Henceforth, until his pilgrimage to Loretto, Father Frederic gives an affectionately precise description of the famous shrines that commemorate some incident in the life of St. Francis or of other Saints to whom he paid homage during his travels, thus becoming a biographer of Saints rather than a pilgrim or traveler. It is not surprising that in a series of articles which he wrote during the next six years, he set aside the account of his journey and instead recorded a series of religious anecdotes. Thus the charm, freshness, and spontaneity of his impressions gave way to the calm impersonality of a historian recording facts and narrating edifying stories. In

doing this, he was following the promptings of his heart, for he always took pleasure in the companionship of the Saints, especially of the Franciscan Saints, and in giving the readers of the *Revue Franciscaine* inspiring information about them. Thus too, he was following the inclination of his studious mind, for he liked to make the results of his patient historical researches available for the edification of others.

At the sight of Mount Alverna, as a son of St. Francis, he was deeply moved. The memory of his Seraphic Father and of the great marvels which occurred on that blessed mountain filled his soul with joy and exultation. Just as the beloved Disciple ran ahead of St. Peter toward the Master's Tomb, so the otherwise poised Father Frederic ran ahead of his companion toward the holy mountain. He who was usually so reticent concerning his innermost feelings, was now unable to restrain his overflowing happiness and gratitude. Later, he wrote:

Thirteen years ago, in the novitiate, I used to say to myself, "Oh, if only the good God lets me see that holy mountain one day!" And now, at this very moment, I was climbing it. I could already perceive, way up there, its rocks and summit, which was crowned with great trees like some enormous head-dress. I ran on ahead of my companion like a madman, and I sang those words from the hymn *Crucis Christi mons Alvernae recenset mysteria...* (Mount Alverna evokes the mysteries of the Cross of Christ). I ran on, still singing — I was mad with joy! Please forgive me, Very Reverend Father, if I do not tell you all the other emotions which I felt on reaching the top of the mountain. Such things can be felt but cannot be expressed in words: they are ineffable.⁶

Father Frederic and Father Martin arrived in Rome on the Feast of the Ascension, May 25. During the few days which he spent in the world center of Christendom, he visited the Coliseum, the Catacombs, and the principal churches: St. Peter, St. Philip Neri, St. Mary Major, St. Praxides, St. John Lateran, the Scala Santa, and other shrines.

He had an interview with the Very Reverend Father Bernardino da Portogruaro, the Minister General of the

Franciscan Order, and an audience with His Holiness Pius IX. With ten other Friars, he was able to kiss the Pontiff's foot.

During his stop-over in Naples, he went to visit the ruins of Pompei, which made "an unusually painful impression" on him.

On June 3, 1876, he sailed from Naples for the Orient on board the steamer *Scamandre*. After a stormy crossing of the Mediterranean Sea, the ship entered, on the morning of June 8, the famous port of Alexandria, with its forest of high masts of Egyptian boats.

During the two days which he spent in Alexandria, Father Frederic visited, among other monuments, the column of Pompey and the two obelisks of pink granite called "the Needles of Cleopatra." Then he sailed on the same steamer to Port Said, where he landed on the morning of June 11 for another stop-over. As it was a Sunday on which a confirmation ceremony was scheduled, Father Frederic gave an improvised sermon in the presence of Msgr. Louis Ciurcia, O.F.M., the Apostolic Delegate to Egypt. Despite the fatigue of his journey and despite the tropical heat, the Friar did not miss an opportunity to be of some service and to do good. This was to him just another step on the road that was leading him at the same time toward the heavenly and the earthly Jerusalem. A note regarding this sermon is the first entry in a small notebook in which he was to list all of his preaching assignments in the Custody of the Holy Land: "Port Said, June 1876, at a Confirmation: large congregation, rather vehement talk against transgressors of the rules concerning the sabbath, abstinence, and Easter duty."

Long before dawn on June 12, Father Frederic was up and on the steamer's deck, attentively scrutinizing the horizon. He was eager to contemplate the Holy Land, which was the goal of his journey and the promised land of his apostolic dreams. At last he perceived the land of Judea straight ahead of him.

The Holy Land!

The steamer was approaching Jaffa, "Jaffa the Beautiful," the ancient Joppa of Holy Scripture.

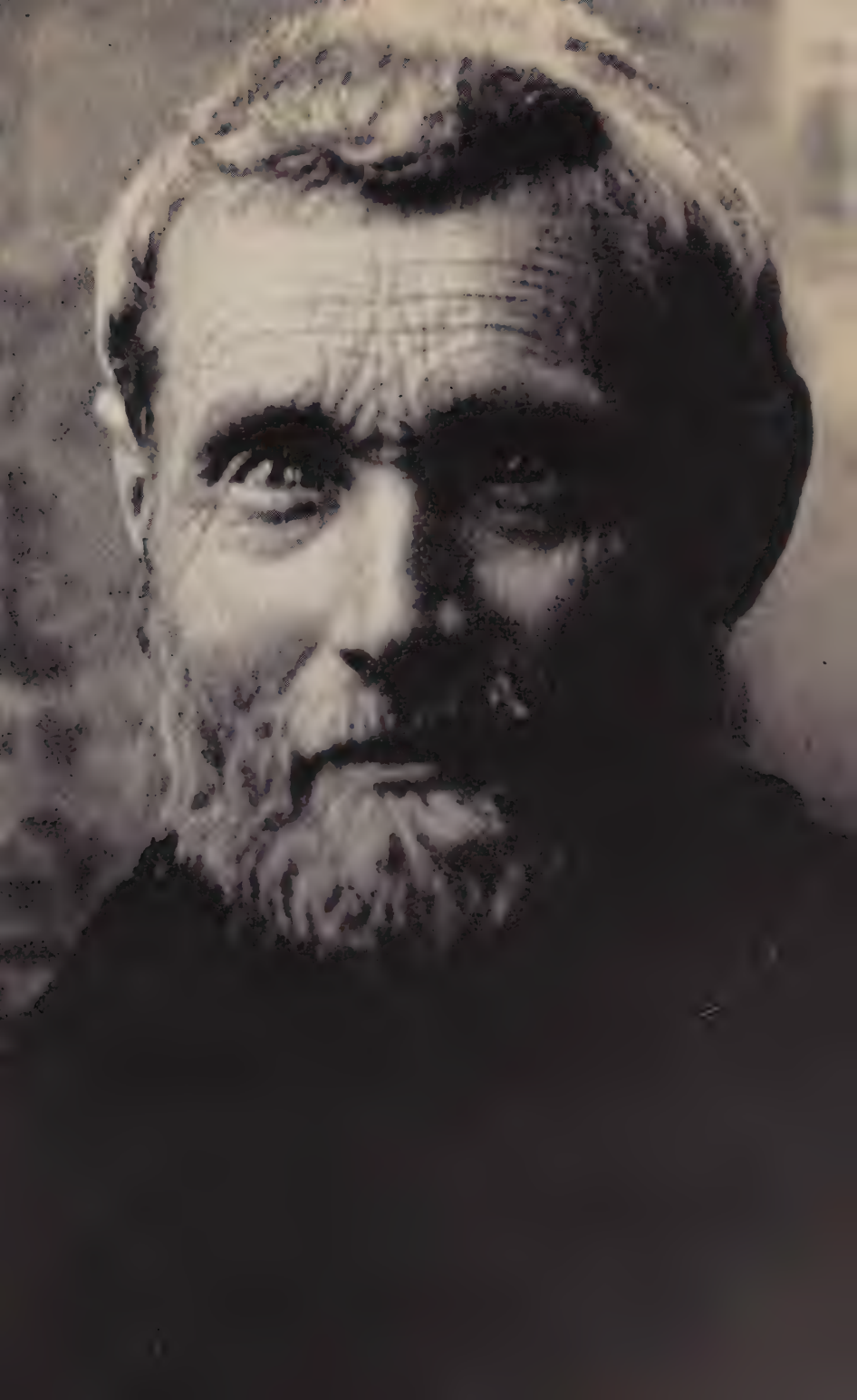
Father Frederic bowed his head. His heart was beating faster than usual. His eyes were moist. It is easier for us to guess than to describe his feelings as he gazed at the land of the Messiah. "There is something awesome and solemn too, in one's first sight of the Holy Land," he wrote. "An inexpressible emotion seized me when I heard that morning the words, 'The Holy Land!' So at last I was arriving in that land of marvels which I had so long desired to see."

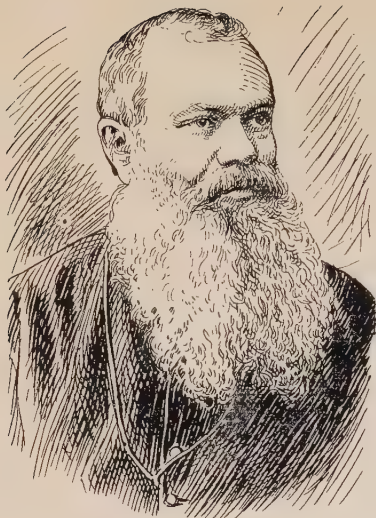
The port of Jaffa is not hospitable, and its numerous shipwrecks have given it a tragic fame. Actually it is one of the most dangerous ports in the world. A series of reefs prevent large ships from entering it. Passengers and freight have to be transferred to launches. Nevertheless, in Father Frederic's time, this unsatisfactory harbor was the most important port in Palestine.

After a perfect night, the *Scamandre* lowered its anchor at about six o'clock in the morning at a mile's distance from the shore. The sea was quite calm. Soon a motley fleet of small boats had encircled the steamer. Like a band of wild pirates, the Arab boatmen advanced on the passengers in a mass attack.

Finally Father Frederic was able to climb into a launch, which was propelled by oars manned by muscular Arabs. He passed through the reefs without accident and reached the shore, where a crowd of loafers and traders was gathered. This was the moment when the boatmen, with a broad smile, asked the passengers for a baksheesh.⁷

The passengers from the *Scamandre* failed to appreciate why they had to endure such a wild commotion at this moment to which they had looked forward for so long, when they would have wished to enjoy in recollected silence the holy thoughts and emotions of the occasion.





R. F. JANSOONE (Pierre)



SR. MARIE DES ANGES (Annette)



HENRI



R. F. FREDERIC, O.F.M.

Four religious vocations in the Janssoone family: Pierre was a priest of the Paris Foreign Missions Society; Annette was a nursing nun; Henri drowned while a seminarian; Frederic was a Franciscan missionary in the Holy Land.

◀ Very Reverend Father Frederic Janssoone, O.F.M., First Commissary of the Holy Land in Canada, Apostle of Our Lady of the Cape (first photograph taken in Canada in 1888).



A street in Ghyvelde, France (before 1914).

Cloister of the Franciscan novitiate in Amiens.



Nevertheless, this shore was really a bit of that Holy Land which Our Lord sanctified by His birth and His death and in which He performed His miracles. It was also Father Frederic's new field of action, one that he had chosen with a supernatural attraction. How was he arriving in this favored country? Not as an ordinary pilgrim or a mere tourist motivated by curiosity, but as a fervent missionary in love with our Holy Redeemer Jesus Christ, the son of Mary and the Son of God.

After landing, Father Frederic went to the Franciscan Church near the dock to thank God and Our Lady, Star of the Sea, for their protection during his journey. By reciting an "Our Father" and "Hail Mary," he obtained the first Plenary Indulgence which is granted to all pilgrims on their arrival in the Holy Land.

That same day he was able to visit part of the town and especially its famous gardens. "Nowhere else," he wrote, "have I seen more beautiful trees." The next day, he visited the Turkish fortress, the house of Simon the tanner (Acts 9: 43ff.), and other points of interest.

A series of orchards divide the splendid zone of vegetation that surrounds Jaffa. These famous orchards are separated by colorful hedges of large nopal-plants, whose thick joints resemble plates filled with dark figs and bristling with thorns. Stretching over an area of several miles, they produce a great variety of fruits: lemons, oranges, pomegranates, grapes, vines, bananas, peaches, figs, almonds, and palms. It is said that sailors on board ships up to two leagues from the shore perceive the scent of these fruit trees during the flowering season, and thus, so to speak, smell the coast before seeing it, as their ship approaches land.

Late in the afternoon, when the sun was going down and losing its strength, Father Frederic watched the Arabs irrigating the gardens after their midday rest. Each enclosure contained one or more chain wells with bucket wheels being turned by a donkey or a mule, causing the water to spill into

reservoirs from which it flowed through ditches to the foot of each tree in the garden.

Father Frederic left Jaffa for Jerusalem at four o'clock on the afternoon of June 17, 1876. In those years that journey was no small undertaking, and it involved innumerable hardships in uncomfortable carriages over terribly rough roads. Thus the traveler reached Jerusalem bruised and almost broken-boned.

The trip was made at night in order to avoid the extreme summer heat. With Father Martin and three other friars, Father Frederic took his place in the stagecoach, which was honored with the pompous title of "Prussian carriage." In reality this horrible cart was a heavy wagon drawn by two horses and driven by a coachman who spoke the *lingua franca* of the Levant. Its three open benches were springless yet adapted to the jolts of the road. In 1876, it represented the height of comfort. Its continuous loud crackings at every moment threatened an imminent breakdown.

A lengthy meditation on the biblical associations of the region through which they were traveling was the best way for the pilgrims to pass the time in a religious state of mind and to endure the jolting of the wagon.

At the end of the journey, Father Frederic admitted that he had not failed to use the method recommended for an effective preparation of the soul: "We suffered. We had time to meditate. So we were not idle."

On leaving Jaffa for Jerusalem, the road passed among the marvelous gardens and then crossed the famous Plain of Sharon, the beauty and fertility of which is praised by Holy Scripture.

After three hours on this passable road, the travelers perceived the little town of Ramleh, which is said to be the former Arimathea, the home of Joseph and Nicodemus, who had the honor of burying Our Lord. Father Martin and Father Frederic took supper in the Franciscan friary and left

two of their companions there. The third, who traveled on with them, was a young religious.

The horses now set off at a trot, by starlight, as the wagon was not equipped with a lamp. The travelers bounced and jounced on the benches. During the night, clouds hid the stars, and the darkness increased. It began to rain. In the mountains, the road became "frightful."

Nevertheless, Father Frederic kept his mind occupied with holy thoughts and interrupted his devout meditation only to continue it in another way, by discussing with his companion the great events of biblical history which had taken place in the district through which they were traveling.

It was after dawn when they entered the deep and narrow Valley of the Terebinth, which had been the scene of David's victory over Goliath.

An hour later, Father Frederic perceived the dome of the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre and the battlemented walls of the Holy City. At that moment, one of the most beautiful dreams of his life became an ineffable reality. His heart and his imagination were gripped by the unforgettable first impression which, more than any other famous city of antiquity, Jerusalem, the most blessed and the most cursed of all towns, makes on a traveler.

It was about six o'clock in the morning on Sunday, June 18, 1876, that Father Frederic made his humble and stirring entrance into Jerusalem. More than ten years later, he could still feel "that impression of melancholy and I know not what mysterious sadness, yet a sadness that is wholesome because it inspires recollection and prayer."

PART TWO

HIS CHOSEN COUNTRY:
THE HOLY LAND

Chapter 9

THE HOLY LAND MISSIONER

(1876-1888)

As soon as Father Frederic arrived in Jerusalem, he gave his obedience to the Very Reverend Gaudenzio de Matelica, Custos of the Holy Land. This obedience assigned Father Frederic to the Franciscan high school in Aleppo in northern Syria. He had brought with him for that school and the other Franciscan schools in Palestine an encouraging remittance of thirty thousand francs from the Commissary of the Holy Land in Paris.

A brief but complimentary letter from the Very Reverend Father General had preceded Father by over a month and had introduced him to the Custos of the Holy Land:

In order to meet the needs of the school in Aleppo, I have sent an obedience to Father Frederic of Ghyvelde, a professed priest of the French Province, who is a preacher and a young religious of good character and high principles. He was the companion of the late Fr. Fulgence [Rignon, Commissary General of the Holy Land in Paris, who died on November 3, 1875]. He will reach the Holy Land at the same time as Fr. Martin of the Ascension.

The fact that Father Frederic arrived at the end of the school year was no doubt the reason why he did not take up his new assignment at once. And as often happens, circumstances changed these plans: another Father was later assigned to the school in Aleppo.

For a month Father Frederic took advantage of his liberty by visiting the shrines of Jerusalem and its surroundings and by celebrating Holy Masses frequently in them. Of course his first visit was to the Basilica of the Holy Sepulcher, where on the morning of his arrival he had the intense happiness of offering Mass at the altar of Calvary itself.

The reader will recall that when Father Frederic passed through Port Said, he accepted the invitation of Msgr. Louis Ciurcia, O.F.M., to preach at a confirmation ceremony. The congregation was large and recollected, but not very fervent. These people who had been drawn to Port Said by business took more interest in the tangible wealth of Mammon than in the invisible and remote good things of Heaven. Father Frederic had therefore preached forcefully against transgressions of the laws of the sabbath, abstinence, and Easter duty. In one of his notes, he who was usually so calm ventured to write: "a rather vehement talk." Msgr. Ciurcia, during this pastoral visit in 1876, had fully appreciated Father Frederic's sermon and had admired his zeal and religious fervor. Consequently, the new missionary had hardly arrived in Jerusalem when the Archbishop of Alexandria requested his services for a series of retreats. The Custos wrote to the Father General: "The Vicar Apostolic of Egypt and the Superior of the Christian Brothers in Alexandria have asked me to send them Father Frederic of Ghyvelde to preach retreats to the Brothers and Sisters of the Vicariate. I considered that their request should be granted. Father Frederic has gladly consented."

The first of this series of retreats took place on August 8, 1876, in the large community of the Brothers of Christian Schools in Alexandria. In order to counteract the hardships of "the ungrateful career of teaching," especially amid the complexities of Egypt, Father Frederic preached spiritual perfection to them "in a degree that was not mediocre." His absolute standards suggest that his talks were strongly buttressed with supernatural exhortations.

From Alexandria he went to Cairo, first to the School of St. Joseph of Khoronfish directed by the Brothers of Christian Schools, and then to the hospital in which the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Apparition served as nurses.

Father Frederic labored with the zeal of a neophyte in these first three eight-day retreats, which he preached in rapid succession while his constitution was becoming adjusted to the tropical climate. He spent himself so generously that Msgr. Ciurcia had to make him rest for four days, and to give him the following fatherly warning concerning the danger to which he was exposing himself by overworking in such a climate: "My dear son, remember that you are not in France and that here we must practise our apostolic ministry with more moderation if we do not want to run the risk of having a breakdown, the results of which can be very serious."

Father Frederic took advantage of this period of rest to visit several places associated with the stay of the Holy Family in Egypt: at Matarieh near the ancient city of Heliopolis, the Tree of the Virgin, which is said to have sheltered the Holy Family during their flight; and in Old Cairo, the Grotto of the Holy Family. He also went up to the fortress and visited the Mosque of Mehemet Ali and the strange Well of Joseph.

He resumed his sermons in the convent of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd at Shubra in the suburbs of Cairo. He gave one retreat to the Sisters, with four long talks each day; and another to the girls in the institution. The pupils of all the classes, whom he wished to share in the benefits of the retreat, gave him one of the most consoling surprises of his priestly career when they made this petition: "We want to make a major retreat, like the good sisters. We request eight full days, in silence and without recreation, like our teachers." And they scrupulously kept their promise. But Father Frederic's deepest consolation came from the schismatic pupils who requested the great favor of following all of the spiritual talks and ceremonies and who for eight days did not want to omit anything: prayers, Way of the Cross, etc. They followed

everything with admirable devotion. At the end of the retreat, the hearts of all were changed and imbued with fervor.

In order to reach Jaffa on the date agreed upon with the Custos, Father Frederic felt strong enough to conduct two retreats simultaneously, preaching six times a day and devoting the rest of the time to hearing confessions in a church that was as hot as a furnace, in a heat of 86 to 95 degrees. He was very charitably warned about his lack of prudence.

The Feast of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary marked the end of all three retreats. The fervent preacher was filled with radiant joy and seemed to be in better health than ever. But this was a dangerous illusion: he fell seriously ill the next day, stricken with a congestion of the abdomen and of the brain. The chaplain watched by his bedside all night. The patient insistently asked for the Last Sacraments. Later he wrote:

I was almost mad with joy at the thought that my exile was coming to an end. I had a consoling trust that the good God would not reject me from His presence after my preparation during the past six weeks and my persevering desire over the past fifteen years. But I had not taken into consideration the virtue of obedience. My confessor ordered me to let the community do as it wished: all of them began to pray for my recovery, and the good Father did not give me the Sacraments. In my simplicity I had imagined that I was at the gates of Paradise, but I had to retrace my steps and resign myself to continue bearing the burden of life. "Woe is me because my existence is prolonged."

Thanks to the prayers of the community, he recovered, but his convalescence lasted four weeks.

One day while he was walking in the garden of the Shubra institution, in the shade of the date and palm trees, he saw a little girl standing alone at the church door. She was very serious and recollected, motionless, with eyes lowered and lips moving.

"Who is that child?" he asked a nun. "And what is she doing there, away from her companions?"

"Father, she is the little girl who had to leave the house before the retreat because she was sick. She has just come back in good health, and we simply have had to let her make her major eight-day retreat all alone."

This charming incident touched Father Frederic's sensitive heart. To us it is clear evidence of the deep impression and of the intensive religious atmosphere which the teaching of the Friar had created among the Sisters and the children of the community of the Good Shepherd in Shubra.

A few days later, Father Frederic gave his first talk to the small community of the Good Shepherd at the French Hospital in Suez. Then he directed a double retreat among the Sisters of the same Order in Port Said, giving as many as five talks a day.

Upon arriving in Jaffa, he heard about the sudden death of Father Ange de Molières, his former theology teacher in Bourges, who was to preach the yearly retreat to the Sisters of St. Joseph there. Although Father Frederic's convalescence was barely over, he felt it was his duty to replace the deceased priest.

He acquired a real reputation for holiness in this series of ten successive retreats. He had given proof of his intense zeal, amazing mortification, enlightened spiritual direction, and living example of personified devotion. Those who knew him were already saying, "He is a saint!"

In this apostolic journey, Father Frederic had experienced "great and very great consolations" as a priest. And according to him, the reason, the supreme reason, was that "I met simple and docile souls who sincerely love the good God and who are seeking the secret of loving Him still more."¹

On January 13, 1877, Father Frederic began his term of service in the Basilica of the Holy Sepulcher, which was to

last until April 4 of the same year. Each new member of the Custody of the Holy Land must serve there for a period which does not usually exceed four months. Thus a dozen Franciscan Friars reside at all times in the living-quarters of the Holy Sepulcher as guardians of the sacred structure which encloses the Savior's Tomb in the center of the circular basilica, under the large dome. They form an advance guard of the Roman Catholic Church, assigned there as sentinels at regular intervals and then relieved. During this assignment of several months, they are enclosed in a building that resembles a dark and narrow prison. In Father Frederic's time, living conditions were very difficult. There were only small cells that were always cold, damp, and dark. After the Austrian Emperor Francis Joseph gave a generous gift to the Basilica, the Friars were at least able to have a little recreation in the fresh air on a small balcony surrounded by high walls. During his visit to Palestine in 1869, the Emperor had been so shocked by the extreme poverty of the living-quarters in the Basilica that he exclaimed with obvious emotion: "Why, my prisoners condemned to the penitentiary are better lodged than the Franciscans!" He obtained permission from the Turkish authorities to have a terrace built in place of a horse stable belonging to Moslems which was located above the Franciscan chapel. The stamping of the horses' hoofs on the weak flooring not only disturbed the Friars during their Office but endangered their safety.

When the Basilica is closed, the religious receive their food like prisoners through a large opening in the only door. At night, in case of necessity, they also have to go out through that opening. Throughout their stay in the Basilica, they are busy with the daily ceremonies and processions to the various shrines and altars and with the maintenance of those that belong to them. They also welcome groups of pilgrims and hear confessions. Every night a Friar stays up and goes from one chapel to another to make sure that everything is in order.

The Basilica of the Holy Sepulcher is a world center of Christendom which is not occupied only by Catholics. As a result of sad events in past centuries, the dissident churches of the Greeks, Armenians, Copts or Abyssinians, share the inheritance of the children of the true Church, who are juridically the sole owners of the Basilica. This distressing sharing of the church of Jesus Christ among the various denominations is like an enduring symbol of the division of His clothes by the Roman soldiers.

Since the 14th century, the Franciscan Order, as delegate of the Holy See, represents the Roman Catholic Church in the Basilica. The Friars must reside in it with clergy of the dissident rites and with the Moslem porters. For since the conquest of Palestine by Saladin, two Moslem families retain the exclusive right, from one generation to the next, of guarding the Holy Sepulcher as a fief. And by some juridical technicality, such as is found only in the Orient and which is a major humiliation for Catholics, one of two families has only the right to keep the key, while the other has only the right to use it. And until recent times, one of the three communities residing in the Basilica — the Franciscans and the Greek or Armenian dissidents — were obliged to pay the Moslem porters a tax each time the door was opened, whether it was the daily opening in the morning and at noon or some special opening.

Father Frederic strove to rise above these religious quarrels and the legal or diplomatic conflicts which were often their consequence. He intensified his deep faith by meditating on the sublime human and divine mysteries of the past which his surroundings so vividly recalled to his eyes day and night. Throughout his stay in the Holy Land, he had a profound appreciation of the long and solemn liturgical ceremonies, at which he often presided when he became Vicar Custodial. He wrote: "I enjoy these beautiful ceremonies. For me they are already like paradise on earth."

His spirit of mortification was in harmony with the momentous sufferings which had reddened this spot with the

Savior's blood. He reminded himself that "the disciple is not above the master." He willingly endured the hardships of a cramped and unhealthy monastery and of a very heavy schedule.

During his stay in the Basilica of the Holy Sepulcher, he received a new assignment. At the suggestion of Msgr. Ciurcia, the Custos asked Father Frederic, as a favor to the Apostolic Delegation to Egypt, to be director and chaplain of the Brothers of Christian Schools in Cairo. He accepted, but as Easter (April 1, 1877) was near, he requested the privilege of celebrating at the Holy Sepulcher that Feast, which is the greatest of the year in Jerusalem. The Custos therefore wrote to Msgr. Ciurcia: "That consolation can be granted to his fervor and devotion... He deserves this favor, and Your Excellency will not be offended because I granted it to him."

Later in Canada, Father Frederic's longing for a solitary life often drew his thoughts back to Calvary and the Tomb of Christ. He wrote then:

Most Reverend Father, do you think that one day I may see the Holy Land again? Will I have worked enough for it that I may earn the privilege of going to end my days in Jerusalem? I would like to be at the Holy Sepulcher, in order to do a little more penance and to lead a solitary life there, without any assignment or external ministry. That is what I would desire, if the good God grants me life.

On April 6, 1877, the Custos notified Msgr. Ciurcia: "Father Frederic of Ghyvelde will arrive in Alexandria on the Austrian steamer, assigned to Cairo as chaplain and spiritual director of the Brothers. He is ready, not only to discharge his regular duties, but also to perform any task that is in the interest of the mission. I am very glad, and I hereby permit Your Excellency to give him whatever assignments you may consider useful and necessary."

The Brothers of Christian Schools had come to Muski in 1854, at the request of the Holy Land Fathers. They began their work in poverty, but their value as educators was soon

recognized. Their pupils increased in number beyond all expectation, to such a point that when the Viceroy of Egypt, Said Pasha, heard about the school, he granted a large piece of land to the Brothers for a bigger building in the Khoronfish section of the city, not far from Muski. Construction began in February, 1859, and progressed so well that the ground floor was occupied on July 14. The new school was founded. It became known as "the great school in Cairo."

The buildings in Khoronfish included two divisions: the boarding school or high school, which had day pupils and half-boarding pupils, and the free school with only day pupils. In 1876, the two schools had a faculty of more than twenty Brothers and a student body of 225 pupils, including 125 in the free school.

Father Frederic now exercised his zeal in these institutions for children of different racial and religious groups: Christians of several denominations, Moslems, and Jews. He fully satisfied the Brothers's expectations.

His predecessor had been unable to devote himself adequately to his ministry as chaplain of the schools because he had been too absorbed by his duties in the neighboring Franciscan parish. The director of the institution had sent out this appeal of distress to the religious authorities: "Please be so kind as to give us a chaplain who will say a few words in chapel to these young and interesting listeners, and who can give them a little retreat during the year and hear their confessions without having to measure his time too much, as the one whom we have is obliged to do... We repeat, please obtain for us a chaplain who can give himself to our children and to us."

Father Frederic was an ideal chaplain in two ways: first by making up for the deficiencies of the preceding situation, and secondly by providing the Brothers and students with a really excellent ministry consisting of instructions, catechism, and frequent confessions. In 1877 and 1878 he preached the Month of Mary to the pupils, and organized a triduum in

preparation for First Communions. It was very probably he who preached the Brothers' annual retreat in August, 1877.

Above all, with the children he became an apostle of frequent confession and communion, practices which were rather neglected at that time. He often mentioned this subject in his sermons and in the articles which he wrote for the *Revue Franciscaine* of Bordeaux from 1878 to 1880. He spoke of Holy Communion in truly burning terms, with an irresistible fervor and a contagious enthusiasm:

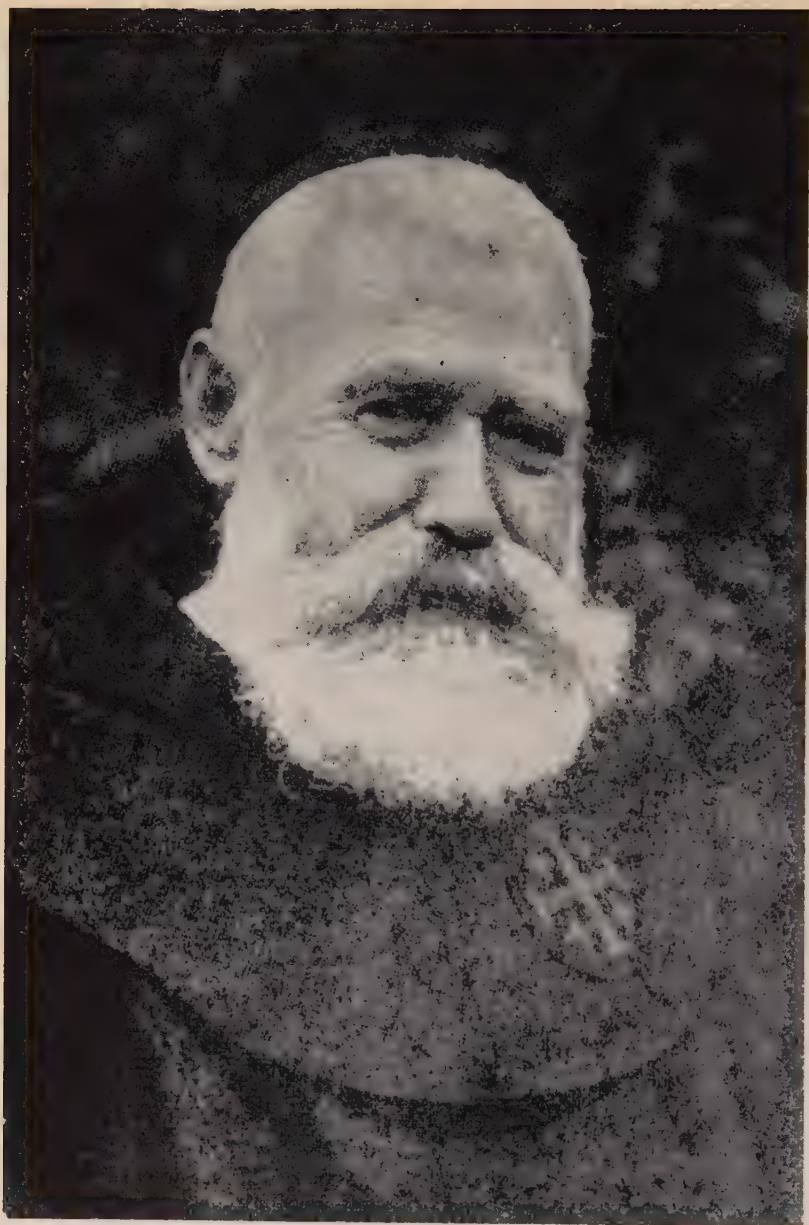
Ah, Communion — Holy Communion — frequent, yes, yes, frequent and holy, as Holy Mother Church tells us: **sancte frequenterque**. Let us preach Holy Communion, frequent Holy Communion! Let us be insane with love for Our Lord in the Sacrament of His Love. St. Francis was madly in love with Jesus in the Eucharist. All the Saints of his Order have loved Him likewise: they preached that love to the people, and God gave them His blessing, and the people were converted.

More than a quarter of a century in advance, he anticipated the teaching and fervent exhortations of St. Pius X. He also unwittingly followed the example of one of his most distinguished contemporaries, St. Don Bosco, who in 1893 was advocating not only frequent and daily Communion but also early Communion. The souls of the saints are able to become attuned, as though by some strange antenna, to the purest and most delicate tones of the Catholic faith.

Father Frederic's zeal enabled him to undertake other tasks, without neglecting his duties as chaplain. He frequently assisted the Franciscan Fathers in charge of the parish of Our Lady of the Assumption in Muski. In 1877-78 he instituted a series of Advent and Lenten sermons in French for the numerous French colony of Cairo that had long desired to have them. And on the Feast of the Ascension in 1878 he officiated at the opening of a new temporary Franciscan chapel dedicated to St. Joseph in the aristocratic Ismailia quarter, a new center of Catholic life which was destined to become the finest parish of Greater Cairo. He also occasion-



Jerusalem, from St. Savior Franciscan Monastery; in the background the Mount of Olives; in the right foreground the dome of the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre.



Very Reverend Father Godfrey Schilling, O.F.M., founder of the Franciscan Monastery of the Holy Land in Washington, D.C., U.S.A., and close friend of Good Father Frederic.



Father Frederic welcoming pilgrims at the entrance of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem.



Interior of the Holy Stable in Bethlehem: on the left the site of the Nativity; on the right the Holy Crib and the Altar of the Magi.

ally preached and heard confessions at the Good Shepherd Sisters in Shubra and at the hospital directed by the Sisters of St. Joseph. He served alternately as spiritual director of souls living in the world and of religious who have taken a vow to strive for evangelical perfection.

In June, 1878, Father Frederic was to leave Cairo for Jerusalem. But he was to continue his missionary life throughout his stay in the Holy Land. Soon he would unite it — to his “very great consolation,” as he wrote — with his life as Vicar Custodial, an assignment that was already heavy enough in itself. For as Vicar Custodial he had to preside over numerous long religious ceremonies in the large Franciscan Friary of the Holy Savior, perform a large share of the general administrative duties of the entire Custody, serve as chaplain of the Brothers of Christian Schools in Jerusalem and as extraordinary confessor of the Sisters of Our Lady of Sion, in Emmaus, etc.

To give a more complete idea of his life as a missionary in the Holy Land, we submit the following list of some of the sermons which he preached as Vicar Custodial: at the invitation of Father Marie Alphonse Ratisbonne he preached the major annual retreat to the large community of Sisters of Our Lady of Sion at the Ecce Homo convent from September 1 to 8, 1878; he frequently gave annual or monthly retreats or sermons to the Sisters of St. Joseph in Jaffa, Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Beit Djalah, to the Carmelite nuns of Jerusalem and Bethlehem, to the Sisters of Our Lady of Sion, to the Brothers of Christian Schools in Jerusalem, and to the faculty of the Patriarchal Seminary in Beit Djalah.

On September 19, 1886, he greeted the Sisters of St. Joseph in Jaffa with these significant words: “Blessed be God for bringing us together, for the seventh time since my arrival in the Holy Land, in order to have a holy retreat.”

Several times he had the honor of preaching the solemn and stirring Way of the Cross on Good Fridays.

Due to his eminent rank as Vicar Custodial and to his ability as a preacher, Father Frederic was often selected to give the sermon at important official ceremonies, among which we may mention the blessing of the first stone of the French Catholic hospital of Jerusalem on May 4, 1879, a most impressive ceremony at which Msgr. Vincenzo Bracco, the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, presided, and which was attended by a large crowd of Catholics and people of all races and creeds, including the foremost public authorities of Palestine and everyone of importance in Jerusalem; also the blessing of the chapel of the Catholic hospital in Jaffa on January 31, 1881. Another occasion, the opening of the Basilica of St. Ann in Jerusalem on July 26, 1879, on its being restored to Catholic use after six centuries of profanation and neglect, gave Father Frederic the privilege of delivering there, "before a rejoicing congregation," the first sermon in honor of Good St. Ann.

It would be easy to make a long list of his sermons and talks on special occasions. The preceding examples serve to disclose to some extent the pre-eminent role which he played in the life of the Church in the Holy Land.

Chapter 10

THE VICAR CUSTODIAL

(1878-1888)

The Custody of the Holy Land is an international Franciscan province and an undertaking that is "catholic" in the fullest sense of the term. It has a twofold function and a twofold goal: to protect and to acquire the shrines erected on the spots which were the scenes of events narrated in the Gospels, and in addition to assure the functioning of the mission itself with its three principal groups of projects: the conversion of non-Christians and schismatics, the parish ministry in the already organized Catholic communities, and the education of the youth of both sexes, including the care of orphans and widows.

The Custody is governed by a superior called the Custos,¹ assisted by an advisory council known as the *discretorium*. The superior has the titles of Most Reverend Father and Guardian of Mount Sion and of the Holy Sepulcher. He is always an Italian. In liturgical ceremonies, he has the privilege of bearing episcopal insignia. His council consists of a Vicar Custodial, who is always French, a General Procurator, who is always Spanish, and five *discreti* or advisors, representing the principal language groups: an Italian, a Frenchman, a Spaniard, a German, and a Englishman or American. The term of office of the council and the superior is six years.

In accordance with the recommendation of the French government to the Sacred Congregation of the Propagation

of the Faith, and with that of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Paris to the French Consul in Jerusalem, Father Frederic, when he left France for Jerusalem, was destined to be the French member of the *discretorium* of the Custody, while Father Martin Andrieu was to be promoted to the rank of Vicar Custodial. Despite this pressure on the part of the French government, which as a matter of fact was rather displeasing to the Custody, two or three weeks after his arrival in Jerusalem, Father Frederic was given a different assignment, even though he was juridically available to join the *discretorium* as its French member. The reasons for this decision were his very recent arrival, his lack of acquaintance with the Italian language and with the territory and personalities of the Holy Land, and his lack of experience in the work of the Custody. Father Marie Léon Patrem of Limoges was therefore elected in his place.

On November 7, 1877, Father Martin Andrieu resigned from the position of Vicar Custodial. It would seem that he was tired of insisting on the maintenance of the rights of France in the administration of the Custody. It should not be surprising if there is occasionally a certain element of national rivalry among men of different nationalities serving side by side in a religious organization of major importance. The very significance of the cause makes them sensitive about the rights and privileges of their nation. The spirit of Christian justice and charity must counterbalance that of nationalism by assuring the primacy of the spiritual.

For several months, therefore, the position of Vicar Custodial remained vacant. On April 3, 1878, the Very Rev. Father Gaudenzio da Matelica held a meeting of his council in the Father Procurator's room. After having transacted some routine business and having observed the formalities required for elections, the names of three priests to be considered for the position of Vicar Custodial were submitted, in accordance with the regulations established by the Bull *In Supremo Militantis Ecclesiae*, which governs the administra-

tion of the Custody. The voting resulted in a unanimous choice: it was impossible to find someone more worthy of the assignment than Father Frederic of Ghyvelde, the Chaplain of the Brothers of Christian Schools in Cairo. His intelligence and his virtues made him the logical choice, as it were in spite of himself.

A few days later he received the formal notification. He was thirty-nine years old. It was not without hesitation that he accepted this new promotion, for he did not consider himself equal to its responsibilities. The Custos was well aware of the new appointee's distrust of himself, as Father Frederic had requested the favor of becoming a missionary in the Holy Land in order to escape nomination as a superior in France. Therefore, fearing a refusal, the Very Rev. Father Gaudenzio asked Msgr. Ciurcia to support him in urging the nomination on Father Frederic. He wrote on April 5, 1878: "I must inform you that Father Frederic, the present spiritual director and chaplain of the Brothers, has been elected Vicar Custodial... I ask Your Excellency not to oppose this change but to favor it as much as possible, especially as Father Frederic may not feel enough courage to accept this new position."

However, Father Frederic, who had not sought the assignment, subsequently accepted it in all simplicity, counting on divine help in carrying it out worthily. He strove to extinguish his personal distaste in order that he might obey the orders of his superiors, who were God's representatives.

He left Egypt on June 8, 1878. His superior there, Father Ermenegildo da Ferventino testified that he had found in him an assistant who was "a very hard worker and of good character," sufficiently peace-loving and skillful "not to set Jerusalem on fire." On June 13, the Feast of St. Anthony of Padua, Father Frederic took up his new duties.

The position of Vicar Custodial made him an important personage with regard to rank and precedence. He was now the first assistant of the Custos and the second dignitary of the entire Custody of the Holy Land, which numbered three

hundred and fifty Friars. In those years the position was of greater importance than today, for its juridical relationship with France, the protecting power of the Holy Places, gave to the French representative a very special prestige. At that time the Vicar Custodial was responsible for official correspondence with France, for certain diplomatic negotiations with the French consul, as well as for the supervision of the Custody's construction program involving churches, friaries, and hospices for pilgrims. In addition he had several specific assignments as a priest: he was the apostolic penitentiary and confessor of the French religious communities, to which he also gave occasional sermons or retreats.

Father Frederic fully justified the confidence of his superiors. He had all the qualities needed by a good Vicar Custodial. The Custos found him an effective assistant. In accordance with religious convention, he referred all the honor and merit of the work to the highest authorities, thus favoring that mutual good will which must govern relations between superiors and subjects. His modesty and self-denial sometimes induced him to play a self-effacing part when issuing orders and a leading role in executing them. He was the kind of leader who used that method which is not so popular nowadays: he did not say "Go," but "Come." He drew others to follow him. In the times of the Divine Master, the shepherds walked ahead of the flock, and the sheep followed faithfully.

Father Frederic fulfilled his responsibilities with such tact and meekness that no one ever had the least thought of disobeying him. Being utterly without personal ambition, he made himself so small that he interfered with no one. He was not at all tempted to inject himself into the duties of others, and consequently he was absorbed only with his own tasks. His spirit of initiative was all too easily paralyzed by a dread of responsibility. Because of this timidity, he was never an effective first-rank leader. Nevertheless in the second rank he played a part that has rarely been equalled among great organizers.

Father Frederic served as Vicar Custodial for two terms, from 1878 to 1888, until he was appointed Commissary of the Holy Land in Canada, with residence at Trois Rivières.

But his term of office was not lacking in trials. One important and delicate problem, which remained undecided for a number of years, caused him much annoyance. It was a matter of precedence in liturgical ceremonies, which was made still more complex by an element of national prestige. In a firm and pacific way he sustained the rights which belonged to the Vicar Custodial's rank, and sought the approval of the authorities in Rome. He even acquired a new right, that of preaching the Way of the Cross in French on Good Friday in the streets of Jerusalem.

In the light of these facts we can understand how unjustified was the intervention of M. Ledoulx, the French Consul in Jerusalem, who, under the instigation of nationalist elements, in 1886 attempted to obtain the dismissal of Father Frederic as Vicar Custodial. The representative of the French Republic alleged that "Father Frederic is indeed a holy man, but his obedience to his superiors goes beyond the limits of his responsibility. He is not adequately defending the rights of France." The Franciscan Visitor General of the Holy Land gave the Consul this almost scornful reply: "The established laws and regulations must be followed. The Father Vicar is a very outstanding religious who is an honor to France and who serves the Holy Land well." ²

In reality, without neglecting his own country, Father Frederic gave a priority to his service to God over service to the most dearly loved of what Paul Valéry calls these "mortal civilizations." And if — to use Charles Péguy's terms — his *mystique* occasionally came into conflict with a human *politique*, the former simply came forth all the more radiant from the encounter.

Thus his virtues shone still more markedly in another trial which caused him suffering: the friction that arose during his re-election as Vicar Custodial on May 20, 1884. On

the evening of that stormy day, the Custos noted in his diary: "In the midst of serious difficulties, Father Frederic of Ghyvelde was re-elected Vicar Custodial."

We may sum up Father Frederic's virtues as Vicar Custodial as follows: he was at the same time a skillful, energetic, and supernaturally-minded diplomat, a vigilant supervisor of church construction projects, and a patient, precise, and extremely valuable codifier of regulations, while always remaining a zealous missionary and a religious whose spirit of prayer and devotion to duty were exemplary. Subsequent chapters will describe his ability as director of pilgrimages and organizer in foreign countries of annual collections of funds for the Holy Places.

THE DIPLOMAT

The task of maintaining the rights of the Custody of the Holy Land made it necessary for the Vicar Custodial to write letters to, and to engage in numerous diplomatic negotiations with important dignitaries in Palestine: primarily with the French Consul, but also with the Consuls of Austria, Russia, Spain, with the Latin and Greek Patriarchs of Jerusalem, and with the Turkish Pasha of Constantinople. Father Frederic was able to earn a favorable reception among them thanks to his refined courtesy, his dignified yet humble bearing, and his sincerity and integrity. As soon as they became aware of his spirit of justice and conciliation, all of them considered him a *persona grata*.

Not only did he enjoy the special esteem of the French Consuls in Jerusalem, as their correspondence testifies, but he was also respected by the Armenians, the Greeks, and the Moslems, who acknowledged his integrity, zeal, and holiness. With the former as with the latter, he proved to be a skillful diplomat who was self-effacing whenever — according to one of his favorite expressions — "the formula had been found" for the necessary agreement.

THE BUILDER

Father Frederic supervised the construction of several religious buildings of the Custody. But the most outstanding example of his success in diplomacy and of his zeal was the labor which he devoted to the construction of the Franciscan parish church in Bethlehem. The old church, which had for centuries been dedicated to St. Catherine of Alexandria, had become inadequate for the needs of the people, who were increasing in numbers year by year. It was therefore decided to erect on the same location a new Romanesque church, that would adjoin the transept of the great Basilica of the Nativity.

During his pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1869, the Austrian Emperor Francis Joseph had spontaneously offered 60,000 gold francs for the enlargement of the parish church in Bethlehem and the same amount for the remodeling of the Church of St. Savior in Jerusalem, as both projects were considered necessary. But in that land of conflict where disputes arose from a mere nothing and can be settled only by the Friars' patience, it happened that the gift of the devout Emperor became the first stumbling block. By means of his valuable offering, the Emperor wished to assume control of the project. But the French Consul lodged a formal protest, for fear that another nation might interfere with its traditional jurisdiction and might later claim new privileges and rights. He also considered that the plan was a threat to the independence of the Fathers in the Holy Land. As a result, the whole project remained suspended for ten years, as official negotiations were resumed only in 1879. It was then that Father Frederic played a leading part. In the spring of 1879 he asked M. Patrimonio, the French Consul, to resume the negotiations and to submit a report to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Paris. Next he had several interviews with the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem. And to avoid any misunderstanding, in 1880, with the permission of the Custos, he made several private visits to the Greek Bishop and Patriarch of Bethlehem.

Finally, after various negotiations had been completed, Captain Guillemot, who had achieved celebrity for his archaeological discoveries in Palestine, was named architect, and the Father Vicar Custodial was assigned to the over-all supervision of the undertaking, with the Father Vicar of the Bethlehem Friary as substitute in his absence and Father Jean as director of the work. The project was launched in February, 1880.

Once when Father Frederic was criticized for having acted imprudently in asking the French Consul to resume the negotiations, he declared that therein he had "sought nothing but the glory of God and the salvation of souls" — which were always his supreme motives.

The whole undertaking of the reconstruction of the Bethlehem parish church encountered numerous obstacles and hindrances, particularly on the part of the Greek Orthodox clergy, whose scheming and opposition were designed to effect the abandonment of the project. Father Frederic described the meddling of the Greeks in a lengthy report and mentioned it in the following brief note in the *Annales du Très Saint Rosaire*:

During my stay in the Holy Land, being in charge of the construction of the new parish church in Bethlehem, I had the digging for the foundations of the new building done in the small garden, perfectly openly in full daylight. All the Greek monks of the schismatic monastery went up onto the terrace of the apse of the Basilica, and they watched us working at their feet. But that did not prevent them from telegraphing to the Pasha of Jerusalem to accuse us of secretly (sic) digging a passage from there to the holy Grotto! And they made a serious matter of it! ³

These difficulties were also narrated in detail by Mme. Sodar de Vaulx in her beautiful book, *Les Splendeurs de la Terre Sainte* (p. 110 ff.). This distinguished Franciscan tertiary throws a clear light on the leading part played by Father Frederic:

The cause of the Franciscan Fathers seemed to be gravely compromised, or rather lost. The Vicar Custodial, Father Frederic of Ghyvelde — for it was he who was in charge of the undertaking — rightly foresaw that the official negotiations would not succeed, and decided to deal with the opponents in a frank and informal way. By dint of good methods and reasoning, he persuaded the Greek architect to come and inspect the work, offering him perfect freedom to come whenever he wished. This was a very fortunate solution, for it calmed the ire of the schismatics and made the resumption of the interrupted work possible.

However, it had just reached the most delicate stage. As the old church had adjoined the Basilica, the new building required a firm hold in the wall to support a lateral nave. This could not be done without the permission of the Greeks. They granted it, and again all the honor goes to Father Frederic, whose tact and gentleness overcame their ill will.

In order to complete the new church in Bethlehem, Father Frederic soon had to go to France and then to Canada to collect funds. Thanks to contributions from Canada, it was finished and opened in 1882.

THE CODIFIER

Father Frederic's zeal and activity bore fruit in stone buildings. Yet there are other monuments, more humble and much more obscure, which provide for posterity no less proof of his zeal for divine worship and for the inalienable rights of the Roman Catholic Church in the Holy Land: the Codes of Regulations governing the Basilicas of Bethlehem and the Holy Sepulcher. These regulations are still in force today, and the manuscripts on which they are written are preserved as precious relics.

Father Frederic himself compiled, in French, the Code of Regulations of the Shrine of Bethlehem, as the characteristic handwriting of the original document attests, with its very careful penmanship and flowing italics. Moreover the final note reads as follows: "This Code of Regulations was prepared by the Very Reverend Vicar Custodial, in accordance with

the desire and with the explicit approval of the Custos." It was begun in January, 1887, and finished on August 29 of the same year. During the following year Father Frederic added a supplement concerning the Epiphany ceremonies of the Latins.

No one before him had ventured to undertake such an ungrateful but extremely important task: to compile and record the specific customs which were established and practised in the Shrine of Bethlehem by the Latins and the dissident Rites: the Greek Orthodox and the Armenians.

The Basilica of the Nativity had formerly belonged to the Latins and was legally granted in 1347 to the Franciscan Friars, who were officially recognized as Guardians of the Crib of Jesus and as representatives of the Holy See and the Catholic Church. In the 18th and 19th centuries, however, the Greeks and Armenians deprived them of it by means of intrigues and violence that included even the shedding of blood. Since then, the Greeks and Armenians dispute its possession among each other, but they help each other in a mutual agreement, like thieves at a fair, to exclude the Latins, who have been able to retain only the right to pass through the upper church.

The Code of Regulations of the Shrine of Bethlehem, which Father Frederic compiled fulfils a function of primary importance in the avoidance of conflicts between members of the three Rites, who come into daily contact with one another either in the liturgical ceremonies or in the care of the Basilica, and above all in the maintenance of the rights of the Roman Catholic Church. It records the respective rights of each denomination with regard to sweeping and dusting specific limited areas, to the furnishings and the ceremonies of the Holy Grotto, to the opening and closing of the Basilica, and to all the special festivities celebrated during the year.

Many points which may seem insignificant or fantastic to Westerners are the basis of legal rights in the Orient. Here are two brief examples, extracted at random from the Bethle-

hem Code, which will give the reader an idea of the oriental attitudes:

The Latins have the exclusive right to sweep and dust in the width of the wall at the opening of the Joinville door; and if, from time to time, the Armenians should attempt to do it, our sacristan must oppose them. The Latins have the exclusive right to sweep the small semi-circular landing at the bottom of the five steps. — **Note.** From time to time the Armenians try to seize this right from the Latins; our sacristan must never make any concession with regard to this.

To abandon this right of sweeping at the bottom of the five steps would mean to lose the right to go down the passage leading to the Holy Grotto!

The reader must understand that, in the Orient, rights are primarily based on custom: to establish or to neglect a custom is equal to acquiring or losing a right. In a country where the mere fact of possession creates a title to possession, those who have a right must safeguard it night and day. The Franciscan Friars, as Guardians of the Shrine of Bethlehem, must therefore carefully observe, night and day, the comings and goings of the shismatics, and prevent or oppose in a forceful way any and all trespassing, whether open or secret. They must use patience, zeal, and firmness when dealing with the continual vexations of the Greeks or the Armenians.

On October 5, 1887, Father Frederic began to compile the Code of Regulations of the Holy Sepulcher. Like the Bethlehem Code, this too was a work of amazing patience and tact. It forms an invaluable compilation of the most minute details concerning the rights and usages, both ancient and contemporary, with their specific exceptions, of the Latin as well as the dissident Rites.

The objective value of Father Frederic's work and his great personal merit in accomplishing it are disclosed by the numerous complex measures which it involved. For the preparation of the Code for the Basilica of the Holy Sepulcher he had to: collate the various authentic traditional rights and privileges of the different Rites that share the Basilica; acquire

a precise knowledge of those rights despite the religious fanaticism and trickery of the Greeks, who might even conceal one of their rights so that the Latins might not use it against them; undertake lengthy historical research to establish a minute right or privilege; make a careful exploration of the entire Basilica with the famous guide, Brother Liévin, in order to determine certain Latin rights; take the initiative of making several visits to the Greeks, the Armenians, the Copts, and the Ethiopians residing in the Basilica in order to ascertain the uses and extent of their quarters; patiently observe and note the customs and usages of the schismatic Rites over a period of several years; interview the oldest Fraciscans serving in the Holy Sepulcher, especially the Brother Sacristans; study the archives of Holy Savior Franciscan Church, the local history of the Holy Sepulcher, the history of Palestine, especially its diplomatic history; and finally to assemble all this involved and complicated material in a clear code. We can therefore understand that a decree of the Very Reverend Custos Aurelio Buja, signed on February 25, 1900, and placed at the beginning of the Italian translation, gave the force of law to Father Frederic's Code:

We hereby order the first sacristan to keep near him this Code which has been authorized by the Custos and compiled by the Very Reverend Father Frederic of Ghyvelde. We decree that no changes or additions are to be made in it. If circumstances should require alterations, the Brother Sacristan should not make them without the explicit and formal approval of the Very Reverend Custos.

In 1888, Father Frederic added to this Code for the famous Basilica a Code of Regulations for the Community of the Very Holy Sepulcher, which is evidence of his intense solicitude for the regularity of the religious life.

THE RELIGIOUS

Father Frederic was heroically faithful in little things as well as in great matters. He contributed to the establishment of a more regular rule of life not only for the community of the Holy Sepulcher but also for that of the Franciscan Friary

of the Holy Savior. He urged the Father Custos Guido da Cortona to establish a regular daily schedule for the community — nothing more. Yet none of the previous Superiors had ventured to do so. All of the Friars were summoned to a meeting in December, 1880, and they unanimously accepted the measure.

In his zeal for the spiritual progress of the Holy Land, the Father Vicar Custodial wanted religious regularity to become stabilized in each friary of the Custody. He himself gave a perfect example of regularity by never missing the Office in choir, even after an exhausting series of sermons.

While he was not blind to certain *lacunae* of the Custody, his spirit of justice and charity made him rejoice in proclaiming the spiritual good and the important work which it accomplished. Thus in his valuable *Notice Historique sur l'Oeuvre de Terre Sainte* (Quebec, 1881) p. 68-72, he wrote an eloquent defense of his brethren of the Holy savior community, particularly against the accusation of idleness, by describing the real atmosphere of religious generosity and zeal for work which was the rule there.

In his "Letter from Jerusalem," which was published in the *Revue Franciscaine* in 1879, he ended a brief outline of his "poor little work as a Holy Land missionary" with these words: "all for the greater glory of God and for the salvation of souls." That was the supernatural standard which he adopted during his twelve years' stay in the Holy Land for his busy life and his numerous and various yet substantial achievements, which included: a large share in the general administration of the Custody; participation in many lengthy religious ceremonies; special assignments and numerous sermons, as we noted at the end of the preceding chapter; writing many articles for the *Revue Franciscaine*, as well as fairly regular reports on events in the Holy Land during four years for *The Pilgrim of Palestine* in New York;⁴ the compilation of the codes of regulations for the Shrines; the building of churches; and the organizing of pilgrimages.

Chapter 11

THE APOSTLE AND SPIRITUAL GUIDE OF PILGRIMAGES

Like his Seraphic Father St. Francis of Assisi, that great lover of Christ and pioneer of a long line of peace-loving Crusaders, Father Frederic loved to visit the very places that had been hallowed by the Word Incarnate and always had a profound veneration and affection for the Shrines of the Holy Land. He visited all of them, and he carefully collected information concerning each of them. First he was a devout and sincere pilgrim. Later, foreign pilgrims who in turn visited the famous Shrines, especially those of Jerusalem and Bethlehem, found in him a competent and edifying guide. By his way of life and his preaching, he showed them exactly how to travel from the earthly to the heavenly Jerusalem.

Father Frederic wrote extensively about the Shrines of Palestine. He gathered an amount of data concerning each one and concerning the Holy Land as a whole that is really extraordinary. It was from this hidden treasury that he drew the material for his books and numerous articles.

His motives in making such a collection were an ideal of professional competency, a fervent love for the Holy Land, and an apostolic desire to make it known and loved everywhere. He therefore did not make it merely with his stay in Canada in mind — at least not his first stay there, as that could not have been foreseen. However, during that first trip to Canada in 1881, he was able to announce to his host with pride from New York that he was bringing a rich and promis-

ing collection of information: "I have numerous documents on the principal Shrines of our Order which will interest our good Tertiaries, and some documents (most of which are either unpublished or scattered in voluminous works) on the Holy Places which will be of interest to everyone."

In studying his manuscripts and reading his many articles and books, we can see what his aim was: to give the benefit of his discoveries to others, to show the Shrines of the Holy Land as wellsprings of the spiritual life, as real sources of light and fervor, as a kind of supernatural constellation amid the murky darkness of this world.

He made the different Shrines known, especially to the people of French Canada. He took pleasure in describing them, often with all of a local guide's attention to minute detail, either in magazines like the *Annales du Très Saint Rosaire* and *The Pilgrim of Palestine*, or in his two illustrated booklets, *L'Album de Terre Sainte*, or in books, such as his biographies of St. Joseph, the Blessed Virgin and St. Ann. In a booklet on the work of the Custody of the Holy Land, he enabled Canadian readers to make a spiritual pilgrimage to the principal Shrines of Palestine, while awaiting the day when some of them could actually go there. He included a fervent appeal to induce them to contribute funds for the support of the institutions and undertakings of the Franciscan Custody, giving them also a complete outline of its organization. Finally, uniting action to words, he brought about in Canada the reproduction of the Holy Land's most venerated Shrines.

The famous Brother Liévin was "the providence" of the pilgrims in Palestine at that time, while Father Frederic was their spiritual guide.

For more than half a century after 1859, Brother Liévin was the regular guide of the pilgrims who came from all over the world. He travelled with them from one end of the country to another. As Msgr. Landrieux wrote, "he knew the land as one knows his own pocket." His fame was great.

Without wishing to do so, he made it endure by writing a guidebook of Palestine which remained a classic for many years. Father Frederic made extensive use of this guidebook in his writings, condensing passages, as he expressed it, "almost word for word, because of its very great precision."

After mentioning Brother Liévin, Mme. Sodar de Vaulx wrote in her book, *Les Splendeurs de la Terre Sainte*: "The pilgrims also have their spiritual guide, and I am convinced that no French pilgrim in recent years will have forgotten Father Frederic of Ghyvelde, a perfect example of a missionary. It is he who hears their confessions, gives them a retreat, explains the sacredness of the Shrines to them, and leads them along the Sorrowful Way of the Cross."

It was one of Father Frederic's duties as Vicar Custodial to welcome the pilgrims, at least those who spoke French. Many a time he set out to meet the various organized pilgrimages from France, such as the regular French pilgrimage or the popular Pilgrimage of Penance, groups from Belgium and even from Canada. He would go to meet them on the route to Jaffa in the Valley of the Terebinth. As soon as the pilgrims had crossed the battlefield where David had slain Goliath, the Father Vicar Custodial welcomed them with a few friendly words, offering them the hospitality of the Franciscan Hospice, and then led them into Jerusalem.

There the pilgrims went right to the Casa Nova, a large Franciscan hospice, to find rooms, leave their baggage, and take a little rest. Then they left in a procession for the Holy Sepulcher, praying and singing as they went through the streets of the Holy City.

It was in the Basilica of the Holy Sepulcher, usually before the Tomb of Our Lord, that the Father Vicar Custodial officially welcomed the pilgrims, in the name of the Custody and of the entire Church.

When they were not numerous, he would give them this talk at the Altar of Calvary. His way of speaking to them was

simple and moving. As a rule he would comment, with tears in his eyes, on the beautiful Passiontide verse, *O crux ave, spes unica* (Hail, O Cross, our only hope).

When the pilgrimage was a large one, he welcomed it before the entrance of the Basilica, where there was more room and better light.

More than any other group, it would seem that the pilgrimages organized by the Augustinian Fathers of the Assumption benefited from Father Frederic's solicitude, both materially as well as spiritually.

These "Pilgrimages of Penance," as they were called, were major events in France as well as in Palestine. The famous Father Vincent de Paul Bailly, A. A., who founded the great French Catholic newspaper *La Croix* and the publishing firm of La Bonne Presse in Paris, was the director of twenty-eight pilgrimages to Jerusalem between 1883 and 1910. He made all of France take an interest in the preparation of his spiritual crusades. He conducted a vigorous propaganda campaign to recruit pilgrims by word and deed. Using the pen-name "Le moine" (the monk), in his original writings, especially in the lively magazine *Le Pèlerin*, he infused all the apostolic fervor of his ardent soul into this work. He was a former military man and had served in the Papal Zouaves.

Despite its austere program, the first pilgrimage of Penance to the Holy Places in 1882 was extraordinarily successful. The announcements had called for five hundred pilgrims. One thousand enrolled: men and women of all social classes. There were 480 priests, most of whom were so poor that they were given free tickets financed by popular subscriptions for needy pilgrims. The steamers, *La Picardie* and *La Guadeloupe*, were required to transport the groups.

The impression which the "Crusaders of Penance" made in the Orient was profound and unforgettable. A caravan of five hundred pilgrims on horseback rode through Samaria. No such invasion had been seen in Palestine in the living

memory of man. The lengthy caravan of camels bearing the tents and baggage stretched over eight miles. Bedouins came from a distance to watch the apparently endless parade file by.

Ever since the recapture of Jerusalem by the Crusaders in 1187, no similar procession of Latins had been seen freely chanting their hymns through the streets of the Holy City.

Somehow the thousand pilgrims, by some miraculous procedure, were able to find crowded lodgings in the various hospices and religious houses in Jerusalem.

This first penitential crusade surpassed all the subsequent ones by its fervor, its unexpected contingencies, and its great hardships. It pioneered the way for the later popular pilgrimages to the Holy Land. Henceforth the project was firmly established. Other countries, neighbors of France, were soon to adopt the same forceful pattern.

Father Frederic was a great friend of the Assumptionist Fathers and of their Pilgrimages of Penance to Jerusalem. He was not able to welcome the first one in 1882, for he was then in Canada, nor those of 1883 and 1884, as he was then seriously ill in Jerusalem. But with a holy joy he solemnly welcomed the fourth, fifth, and sixth pilgrimages in 1885, 1886, and 1887.

The first time that he officially welcomed a Pilgrimage of Penance in Jerusalem — the fourth in 1885 — he wept tears of joy, as Father Vincent de Paul Bailly testified: "The Reverend Father Vicar of the Holy Land assembled all of us at the Holy Sepulcher and wept at the splendid sight of us, for it proved that the pilgrimages were at last firmly established."

Father Frederic described at length two of these edifying pilgrimages (the fifth and the sixth) for the readers of the *The Pilgrim of Palestine*.

These great French pilgrimages came to Palestine for a month or forty days. The first one brought one thousand "crusaders," the second four hundred, and the fifth three

hundred and sixty, of whom one hundred and sixty were priests. They created a major lodging problem in Jerusalem. The large Franciscan Casa Nova Hospice had been able to supply only twelve rooms for the pilgrimage of 1882, which came during the crowded Easter season. Despite all the generous charity of the Franciscan Fathers, they clearly saw that the Casa Nova's accommodations, which were at all times available for pilgrims from different countries, were inadequate for the army of devout pilgrims. Consequently a special hospice large enough to accommodate all the Crusaders of Penance, all French pilgrims who otherwise had to find lodgings in several buildings, was a necessity.

Father Frederic therefore said to the Assumptionist Fathers: "If you wish to continue your pilgrimages, why don't you build a hospice for the pilgrims?"

In 1884, the Pilgrims of Penance themselves voted that a piece of land should be acquired in Jerusalem. The foundations of the building were laid the following year. In 1886, Msgr. Poyet of the Latin Patriarchate in Jerusalem suggested that the hospice be named *Notre Dame de France*. The first pilgrims were lodged in it in 1888.

A letter written by Father Frederic, the account of Father Vincent de Paul Bailly, and other evidence enable us to state that Father Frederic was the true, though modest, inspirer of the great and splendid project of erecting this hospice. Unfortunately, the building was seriously damaged by shell-fire during the Arab-Jewish war of 1947-48.

In 1894, Father Frederic wrote to Father Bailly:

I will never forget our first talk in Jerusalem, our conversation on the terrace of Holy Savior, looking at the spot where Notre Dame de France is now located — the three of us, Count de Piellat, Your Reverence, and your humble and little servant had met to discuss what the pilgrims' rooms should be called, and we unanimously decided that they should be called "cells."

Each cell was given the name of a Saint. The subscription rate for single cells was seven hundred francs, while that for double cells was fourteen hundred francs.

After this conversation, when the committee of the Pilgrimages of Penance met under the old terebinth in the court of the French hospital Saint Louis, Father Frederic began the discussion and traced on a large sheet of paper the plan of the present building with its two wings.

Father Vincent de Paul Bailly stressed the role of Father Frederic in the magazine *Echos de Notre Dame de France*: "On board ship, when returning [from the third Pilgrimage of Penance], the pilgrims enthusiastically voted 80,000 francs for the purchase of the ground for Notre Dame de France — they were incidentally following the disinterested advice of a holy Franciscan Friar....."

Farther on, Father Bailly added:

The Reverend Vicar Custodial, Father Frederic, who left a well-deserved reputation for sanctity in the Orient, contributed a great deal to sanctifying that journey: he preached and helped in many ways and intensified the hospitality which was offered to us there by St. Francis.

It was he who, in 1884, understood that the Pilgrimages of Penance needed a building in which the pilgrims might meet and pray together, instead of being dispersed in a number of houses — an arrangement which was tiring for the pilgrims, burdensome for the religious communities, harmful to their devotion, and difficult for the organizers...

Taking his stand exclusively from the point of view of the spiritual good of souls, he had no fear of encouraging us to proceed with this project, and subsequent events have proved how right he was. We herewith express all our gratitude to him.

These quotations prove that Good Father Frederic encouraged the work of the French Pilgrimages of Penance with a supernatural devotion and a disinterestedness worthy of a saint.

His spiritual apostolate in connection with the pilgrimages took on three principal forms: preaching brief retreats, receiving new members into the Third Order of St. Francis, and above all preaching the Stations along the Sorrowful Way of the Cross.

His special sermons given to groups of pilgrims seem to have been limited to the Crusaders of Penance. Even if Father Frederic did not inaugurate those retreats, he deserves credit for having fully participated in the movement at the earliest opportunity. After their first visit in 1882, the Pilgrimages of Penance culminated in Jerusalem in a three day retreat as a preparation — like that of the Twelve Apostles — for the Feast of Pentecost. Thus they fulfilled the wish of Pope Leo XIII, who said: "I cannot understand a true pilgrimage to Jerusalem without spending several days of recollection there."

The triduum was preceded by a night spent in Bethlehem, on the eve of the Sunday within the octave of the Ascension, and then by visits to the Holy Places in Jerusalem and its surroundings.

In Bethlehem Father Frederic would spend the night praying with the pilgrims, "a real night in Paradise," as he called it. In 1886 and 1887, when he was explaining to the Crusaders of Penance the marvels that transpired at the Nativity of the Savior, he became so absorbed in his subject that, with the pilgrims, he lost all sense of time. The priests, remembering the Masses which they were scheduled to celebrate, had to bring him back to reality by interrupting him: "Father, it is nearly midnight! It is time for us to prepare for Mass!"

He used to receive as novices or professed members of the Third Order of St. Francis lay persons and secular priests from France or Belgium, "in the shadow of the Cross," at the altar of Calvary. He believed that the Gospel ideal of penance and poverty, which had been so fervently lived by the Poverello and propagated by his sons of the First and Third

Orders, could best be renewed and perpetuated at the very source of the bloody and divine sacrifice. He was convinced that the spread of the Third Order corresponded fully to the clear intentions of the Popes, and that this Order for the laity had proved to be one of the most efficacious means of infusing the spirit of Catholicism into society. He therefore enrolled willing pilgrims, especially priests, even from distant countries, into the Order. Once he gave the Tertiary habit to an Irish missionary from Mauritius Island. On another occasion he gave it to his own brother Pierre, the missionary from India. On January 19, 1881, he asked the Father General to grant the faculties of director of the Third Order to three missionaries in India and China whom he had received into the Third Order of Penance during the preceding year.

It would appear that from his first year as Vicar Custodial he re-established the solemn public preaching of the Way of the Cross in Jerusalem on Good Friday, thus laying the foundation for the right to preach it in French. Later he told the pilgrims at Cap-de-la-Madeleine: "Every year for ten years, we had the happiness of preaching the Stations of the Cross along the Sorrowful Way on Good Friday. All of the pilgrims without exception took part in it."

It would be easy to record, year by year, splendid tributes to Father Frederic's preaching of the Way of the Cross in Jerusalem. He was in fact an extraordinary preacher. His was not a well balanced, symmetrical, "classical" eloquence, but one that came from the heart and touched the hearts of his listeners — in other words, a "seraphic" eloquence.

Here are a few particularly impressive tributes which do justice to his stirring talks to the Pilgrims of Penance. First, that of Mme. Sodar de Vaulx:

The Way of the Cross followed by the Crusaders of Penance is a sight that attracts the entire city of Jerusalem... Father Frederic gives a talk at each Station, and no one could speak about Calvary and the Redemption with more moving emotion. His sermons are not a series of more or less clever arguments, but

the outpouring of a soul that is passionately in love with God and that knows how to communicate the fire of his love to his listeners. The latter are always stirred, and tears appear in many eyes!

The very sight of him is a sermon. To see this austere friar standing on a stone, with his head bare under the burning sun, his pale face flushed only by the effort of thought, with his frail body which seems no longer to belong to this world, while the light of another light is already shining in his feverish and ecstatic eyes, is to realize that the supernatural is his element and that Christ is his life, as for St. Paul and for the incomparable Patriarch of Assisi!

Father Vincent de Paul Bailly, A.A., wrote a similar tribute. As editor of the magazine *Le Pèlerin*, he described for his readers "the royal road of the Cross" which the fourth Pilgrimage of Penance followed on Ascension Friday, May 15, 1885, and which was preached by Father Frederic:

On that Friday there was a Way of the Cross that I am going to tell you about... What a triumphant event it was, that evening! The large cross had been brought from the steamer... Twenty men carried it on their shoulders, and with this precious burden we came to the end of the Turkish barrack (the location of the First Station), where the Father Vicar Custodial of the Holy Land, who looks like St. Francis of Assisi and who must have received preaching lessons from that Patriarch, began to speak to us at length and with heartfelt emotion.

We have now rapidly sketched Father Frederic's activities in connection with the Pilgrimages in Jerusalem, as well as his solicitude for their accommodations and his spiritual influence. But his apostolate extended also to pilgrimages outside of Jerusalem. According to Msgr. Aurelio Briante, former Custos of the Holy Land, it was Father Frederic who, over a decade of years, accompanied the various liturgical pilgrimages which the community of St. Savior makes every year throughout Palestine. And they number at least thirty.

We must make a special mention of those which as Vicar Custodial he described in his articles or books: the two annual

pilgrimages of the St. Savior community to Bethany and to the Shrine of Bethphage, as well as the yearly pilgrimage of the Latin parish of Bethlehem to the Jordan, Jericho, and the Mountain of the Temptation.

The latter was undoubtedly the most picturesque and the most exhausting of all these pilgrimages. It lasted four days, and it never included less than three to four hundred men, women and children. It was what is called "a great pilgrimage" in the Orient — and great were its hardships. The men, carrying the provisions, went on foot and led the procession. The women and children, in groups of three, rode on camels, perched in wicker baskets, whose swaying motion gives one the sensation of being on an ocean liner. During the journey, the men sang hymns in their own language, while the women prayed the rosary. The pilgrims spent the night at the famous Orthodox hermitage of St. Sabas, whose extreme austerity made a deep impression on Father Frederic.

We must also note, at least in passing, the fact that he encouraged the organization of the earliest pilgrimages from Canada to the Holy Land, the first of which took place in 1884. At that time such an undertaking was considered quite extraordinary in Canada.

We should not fail to mention too the numerous articles about Palestine which Father Frederic wrote for the American readers of the monthly *Pilgrim of Palestine*, from its very first issue in July, 1884, and later of the weekly magazine which was its successor from January 1, 1888, *The Pilgrim of Palestine and Messenger of St. Francis*. All of the articles which he contributed to those magazines fairly regularly from 1884 to 1888 were written with the sole aim of making the Holy Land known and loved, of obtaining support for the work of the Franciscan Custody, and of inspiring in his American readers the desire "to make a good and holy pilgrimage to the Holy Places." His articles contained accounts of conversions, of good deeds and edifying examples of the pilgrims, of the various undertakings and pilgrimages, and of the impressive ceremonies in the different shrines of the Holy Land.

SOME OF THE PILGRIMS

A list of the important persons, devout pilgrims, learned visitors, or residents of Palestine with whom Father Frederic was well acquainted or formed friendships would be lengthy. We may mention: the famous Father Marie Alphonse Ratisbonne, who had been miraculously converted by the Blessed Virgin in Rome, who was the founder of the reparation shrine and large convent of the Ecce Homo in Jerusalem, and whom Father Frederic "knew intimately;" Msgr. Charles M. A. Lavigerie (1825-1892), the founder of the White Fathers of Africa who became a Cardinal, and with whom he traveled on a steamer from the Suez Canal to Jaffa in June, 1878, when he was about to take up his new duties as Vicar Custodial; the well known expert on Palestinian history, Victor Guérin, "a friend and benefactor of our Fathers at the Holy Land Commissariat in France," at whose Catholic home in Paris he stayed in 1882; Mme. Sodar de Vault, a Belgian writer and Franciscan tertiary who spent nearly three years in Palestine (1886-1889), and to whom he supplied nearly all the documents for her excellent book, *Les Splendeurs de la Terre Sainte*.

We must make a particular mention of two pilgrims: a Canadian priest and a missionary to India.

The Abbé Léon Provancher, a great Canadian naturalist, in 1881 made his first trip to Europe and his first pilgrimage to the Holy Land by joining a group organized in Paris which numbered thirty-eight persons, including nine priests. He described his journey in a 724-page book, *De Québec à Jérusalem*, "one of the few long works in Canadian literature," according to his biographer, Canon Victor Amédée Huard.

When the French pilgrims made an official visit to the Very Reverend Father Custos in Jerusalem, Father Frederic as Vicar Custodial introduced them. Father Provancher noted in his book: "At that time I was far from thinking that a few months later I would have the pleasure of meeting that same

Father again in Canada, and even of having the honor of giving him lodging in my humble home.”¹

This first meeting in St. Savior Friary apparently did not inspire any further contact between the two priests. Indeed who would have thought that it was destined to mark the foundation, firmly grounded in the soil of Palestine, of a lasting mutual friendship and veneration between them?

Toward the end of January, 1884, Father Frederic became seriously ill. His sickness was a renewal of the disease which he had contracted in Canada two years earlier. He suffered from intense intestinal pains, then a very severe high fever, and his cerebellum and spinal column were affected. The attack was so violent that it endangered his life and obliged him to remain completely inactive during the entire year 1884.

This sick friar was lying in bed in the large infirmary of St. Savior Friary when he was informed of the arrival of a pilgrim from India, a missionary priest who had a very special reason for visiting him: it was his brother Pierre. Much later Father Frederic wrote:

He found me in the infirmary, nearly dying. However, I was able to get up and go across the hall to receive him into the Third Order of Penance...² I received him in our little infirmary chapel, being unable to accompany him to Calvary, where all our pilgrims usually decide to receive, in the shadow of the Cross, the holy habit of the Poor Man of Assisi.³

Before leaving the Holy Places, Father Pierre Janssoone insisted on receiving that holy habit in order, as he said, to be able to do more good in his beautiful mission in India. As for Father Frederic, he wished to draw his brother still closer to himself by adding a second strong bond of fraternity to their blood relationship: the bond of the habit and spirit of St. Francis of Assisi.

This visit, after a twenty year separation, aroused a profound and boundless mutual admiration in both brothers. Pilgrims and other persons who came to see Father Frederic were unanimous in declaring:

"Your brother is a saint! He spends all his time in prayer at the Shrines, without taking the least natural interest in visiting the surroundings..." Before he left, I obtained for him as a gift two thousand rosaries made from the nuts of the olive trees in the Garden of Gethsemane. When he returned to Bangalore, he wrote me that his arrival had been like a real celebration. The government had sent its state carriage drawn by two white horses to meet him. And he added that when he reached his rectory, he did not have a single rosary left, his dear parishioners were so eager to have a souvenir from the Holy Land! ⁴

Far from decreasing due to separation, the two brothers' admiration for each other, based on the edification which each gave the other, increased as the years went by. This visit revealed to Father Frederic the missionary spirit of his brother and the depth and extent of his apostolic zeal, which made the friar marvel. Other reports which he subsequently received thrilled him. Four years later, in 1888, he could not refrain from describing to the readers of *The Pilgrim*, with obvious delight, the pilgrimages, the reception into the Third Order, and especially the many good works of a certain fervent and multi-lingual missionary from British India, whom he does not name but whom anyone who is at all familiar with the Janssoone family and with Pierre's life can easily recognize. Even though Father Frederic's account may have wounded his brother's humility, nevertheless it gave glory to God and edification to its readers, which was all that Father Frederic needed in order to break his silence.

On the other hand, when Father Pierre returned to his mission in India, he could not forget his younger brother whom he had seen in Palestine. The memory of Father Frederic became a stimulus to him in his ascent toward the perfection of the Gospel message and in his ministry for souls, because in the Holy Land he had seen not only Calvary, not only the Tomb of Our Lord, but also his "very dear brother Frederic, a real saint, a great and lovable saint, a miracle-working saint."

Some months, perhaps even several years after his return to Bangalore (for the letter is not dated), Father Pierre Jans-

soone could not refrain from communicating his enduring amazement to his half-sister Victoire, Mme Pierre Emmanuel Deswarte:

So you are now settled with an annuity in the most beautiful country in the world, in **Roozendael**, the valley of roses. May you still blossom like the roses of Rosendael, not only blossom but bear fruit, much spiritual fruit! What better than that can we do in this world? That is the only thing for us — the rest is nothing, absolutely nothing. I am more and more convinced of that truth since I have been to the Holy Places, where I saw not only Calvary, the Tomb of Our Lord, the places where He was conceived and where He was born, but my very dear brother Frederic, who is a real saint, a great and lovable saint, a saint like those whose lives we read with admiration, a miracle-working saint. The sight of him made such an impression on me that his remembrance and his features are continually present in my memory.

Was not the ideal of Father Frederic's former novice master, Father Léon de Clary — "to develop miracle-working saints" — being fulfilled?

Father Frederic, still under the spell of the same admiration for his beloved brother, summed up the latter's apostolic career in a brief obituary notice that was published in the *Revue Franciscaine* of Montreal for June, 1912, p. 306:

It was in the large city of Bangalore that Father Pierre had his greatest success as an apostle. Before leaving for the Orient, he had obtained a Master's degree in literature from a French university. That degree earned for him an assignment by the British government as professor of rhetoric at the upper-class high school, which had from 800 to 900 students, with a salary of nearly two thousand francs, which he distributed among his beloved paupers. Moreover, he served as military chaplain of the Bangalore garrison and assistant chaplain of two hospitals. Yet he still found time to preach retreats to religious communities and to administer a parish of 4,000 communicants, with only one assistant. And he did that for a period of twenty years.

One day when, during his pilgrimage in the Holy Land, his brother asked him how he could do so many things at the same

time, he replied with great simplicity: "Father Frederic, a day is twenty-four hours long." While taking care of the victims of the pest, he contracted the dread disease, which no doubt gradually shortened his life.

The end of Father Pierre's career was made remarkable by his charming piety, his great patience in sickness, and striking outbursts of his gay and spontaneous sense of humor, which he had recovered after the passing attack of scrupulosity in his youth. As soon as he had received the Last Sacraments from his Bishop, the aged missionary smiled and expressed his thanks, then added: "Now that I have my lodging ticket, all I have to do is to take the train for Heaven."

He died in Bangalore on March 18, 1912, after forty-four years' labor in the missions, aged eighty-four.

Like Father Pierre Janssoone, several pilgrims to the Holy Land referred in their travel books to Father Frederic's outstanding qualities and to his reputation for sanctity.

The three preceding chapters have given an outline of the Servant of God's apostolate in the Holy Land.

A special mission brought him to Canada where, during his two periods of residence (1881-1882 and 1888-1916), he was destined to play a major role in the religious life of that country.

Chapter 12

BEGGAR FOR THE HOLY PLACES

(1881)

During Lent in 1881, the funds of the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land were utterly depleted. The two principal causes of this misfortune were the gradual decrease of alms due to the religious persecutions that were afflicting several countries in Europe, and the failure of the Austrian Emperor Francis Joseph to keep a promise. While visiting the Holy Land in 1869, he had promised 120,000 gold francs for the rebuilding of the parish churches of Bethlehem and Jerusalem.

After various delays due to diplomatic intrigues, the planned reconstruction of the church in Bethlehem was undertaken only in 1879, thanks to the initiative of Father Frederic. The work actually began in February, 1880, with the knowledge of the Austrian Consul in Jerusalem. Still counting on the Emperor's gift for the church in Bethlehem, the Superiors of the Custody decided to advance about frs. 50,000 in order to hasten the work. But to their intense surprise and disappointment, in March, 1881, they were officially notified that the Emperor of Austria, instead of making a lump payment, would remit only frs. 20,000 a year until the amount promised for the two churches was paid, which would now take six years.

The council of the Custody met and decided to suspend work on the church in Bethlehem and to send the Vicar Custodial, Father Frederic Janssoone, and the Procurator

General, Father Emmanuel Pascual, to collect funds in their homelands, France and Spain, respectively.

The two Friars left Jerusalem on April 27, 1881, and sailed from Jaffa the next day. They went by way of Rome in order to receive relevant instructions. On the day of their departure from Jerusalem, the Father Custos notified the Father General in Rome, writing, among other things: "Through the Father Vicar, a *conscientious man*,¹ Your Reverence will be informed about matters in the Holy Land... I decided that it was advisable to notify the Prefect of the Propaganda of the arrival of the Fathers Vicar and Procurator, to tell him the purpose of their journey and at the same time to ask for his support."

The Father Custos introduced his two emissaries to the Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith in the following words: "Facing a present that grieves me and a no less threatening future, I found no more fitting solution than to send to France the Father Vicar Custodial, a fervent religious,¹ and to Spain the Father Procurator General of the Holy Land. The first can make an appeal to the public for charity in favor of the Holy Places and of this Mission, while the second will do all he can to obtain a subsidy from the Pious Fund of the Holy Land in Madrid, in conformity with the regulations prescribed by the Sacred Congregation of the Propaganda."

Upon arriving in Rome on May 11, the two extraordinary envoys went to the Vatican, where Pope Leo XIII gave them a cordial welcome and said to them:

"Times are bad. We are passing through a period of trials, trouble and suffering, in which the Church's enemies are striving by every possible means to destroy her beneficent influence on society. However, at this time when other missions are afflicted with great privations, I am happy that Providence is generously supplying the needs of your mission, which is the first in the world."

"Excuse me, Your Holiness," Father Frederic timidly replied, "but it is precisely the great need of the Holy Land that has brought us here. If the charity of the faithful does not promptly come to our aid, we shall be obliged to give up our external mission apostolate and confine ourselves entirely to the guardianship of the Shrines. When we left Jerusalem, our funds were utterly depleted."

At the words, the Sovereign Pontiff was obviously moved. He leaned back in his chair, and after a moment's silence, he declared:

"Well, my sons, go with your Father's blessing — go and beg for the world's pity by reminding it of the obligations of Christian brotherhood. Renew the crusade. Let the voice of poor, abandoned Jerusalem be heard. Relight that generous fire that is ever smouldering for the Holy Land in the depth of every Christian soul."

Then, extending his hand over the two missionaries' heads, the Pope gave them his blessing three times. Strengthened by this triple blessing and encouraged by his words, they separated and bravely set forth toward the countries which had been assigned to them.²

Father Emmanuel Pascual remained in Spain for more than a year. During his stay in Madrid, he obtained an audience with the King and the Queen. Their Majesties received him with unusual kindness and gave him a generous contribution.

Father Frederic was to have still more success, not in France, but in Canada.

His arrival in Paris at the beginning of May somewhat surprised the Commissary of the Holy Land. Father Léon Patrem, one of the Discretos of the Custody, had also just arrived in France, his presence there being necessitated by some problem in his family. The Commissary was therefore wondering what the coming of these two emissaries meant, but a letter from the Father Custos soon cleared up the mystery.

Father Frederic was at this time at the height of his power. He was able to make full use of all his remarkable qualities of mind and heart, which were now reinforced by the lessons that he had gained from experience. Once again he applied himself with fervor to work in Paris. He preached successively in the churches of Saint Louis en l'Isle, Notre Dame de Lorette, St. Nicolas des Champs, Notre Dame de Chartres. As a Christian, as a Frenchman, and as a guardian of the Holy Places, he made a vibrant appeal for the Shrines in Palestine.

Alas, in the very center of Paris he was but a voice crying in the wilderness. His journey was taking place during a whirlwind of anti-clericalism. On March 29, 1880, the French Government had decreed the expulsion of all religious from France. An exemption in favor of the Commissariat of the Holy Land was granted only as a result of strong protests. To continue to seek funds for the Holy Land in such a stormy atmosphere became a waste of time.

Just when the drama of the Custody seemed about to have an unhappy ending, Providence intervened in a way that was obvious. One evening the Abbé Victor Fernique paid a visit to the Commissariat on the rue des Fourneaux. He was vicar at the parish of Notre-Dame des Champs, and it was due to him that Father Frederic had obtained permission to make an appeal in that church. Besides, Father Fernique had known the Friar as Vicar Custodial in Palestine, for he was one of the organizers of a "pilgrimage of aristocrats" to Jerusalem. He was a real apostle of the Holy Land. He had given some very successful lectures about it, with lantern slides, which at that time were a striking novelty. While discussing with Father Frederic the most suitable means of rescuing the Custody from its financial dilemma, Father Fernique mentioned in passing a Canadian priest:

"Yesterday, at St. Nicolas des Champs, I met the Abbé Léon Provancher. He is a Canadian priest, and he is intensely devoted to the work of the Holy Land. He will be in Paris

for a few more days. I urge you to make his acquaintance, Very Reverend Father. He could be very helpful to you."

Father Frederic replied:

"I have just received a letter from one of my colleagues of the Custody, Father Marie Léon, whom you probably know, and he gives me the same advice. You have convinced me. I am very grateful for your suggestion."

After their conversation that evening, Father Frederic sent this note to the Abbé Provancher:

I have just learned with pleasure that you are in Paris. I was very sorry not to have been able to make your acquaintance in Jerusalem and not to have met you in Rome when you passed through. I would be so glad to be able to express to you personally and directly all our profound gratitude for the very brotherly interest that you have for our Holy Land mission and for all the good which you have done for us. I very much want to see you. We would be greatly honored if you came to the Commissariat, but we fear it might not be tactful. So please have the kindness of granting me, very dear Father, a few minutes at your hotel on the day and hour when you will be most free.³

The reply was soon received, and the interview took place at the Hotel Saint Sulpice. The missionary from the Holy Land found himself in the presence of a sixty-year-old priest who had a forceful manner, an observant eye, a lively and bluff personality, and a zest that was sometimes amusing.

"You are welcome, Father," said the Abbé Provancher. "I am happy to see an old acquaintance again."

"An old acquaintance?"

"No doubt you no longer remember the Canadian priest who was a member of the French pilgrimage that you yourself introduced to the Very Reverend Father Custos on the last day of last March in Jerusalem... I also attended the moving Way of the Cross that you preached on Good Friday in the streets of the Holy City."

"So you were with the French pilgrims! I am ashamed that I wrote you I had not met you in Jerusalem."

"You need not be ashamed. A Vicar Custodial who welcomes pilgrims from all parts of the world, often for the first and the last time, can certainly be excused for not having noticed a poor Canadian priest who was lost amid the French pilgrims and who would probably never meet you again..."

"Since then, I have heard so many praises of the zeal of a Canadian priest for our Holy Land mission that I thank God for having led me to meet you. It was Father Marie Léon Patrem, the French Discrete of the Custody, who gave me your address. I cannot fully express my gratitude for the brotherly interest which you take in our work in the Land of Christ. The Custody is at present quite without funds. That is why I have come to make an appeal to my fellow countrymen, with the approval of the Minister General and of the Prefect of the Propagation of the Faith and with the encouragement of His Holiness Leo XIII. But unfortunately the results are inadequate. The times are not favorable... Before returning to Jerusalem, I would like to try another last resort. I will reveal it to you quite frankly: for some time I have been thinking of one day going to make an appeal to the charity of the Catholic people of Canada. May I ask what you think of this plan?"

"It has every chance of succeeding. I am rather familiar with the problem, as I myself recently undertook some steps in that direction with your Minister General."

"Indeed! How happy I am to hear that!"

The Abbé Provancher was particularly concerned about the future of the Franciscan Third Order in his country. He continued:

"The Franciscans are wanted in Canada. On May 25, I went to see the Minister General at the Aracoeli Friary in Rome. I explained to him that our Canadian tertiaries intensely desire that a Father of the First Order should visit

the fraternities and found new ones. There are now excellent fraternities in Montreal and Trois-Rivières. The city of Quebec has some isolated tertiaries, about a hundred."

"As you intervened thus with the Minister General, can it be that you are a tertiary yourself, Father?"

"Yes, Father Frederic, and I am proud of it. I was received into the Third Order in 1864 and was professed the following year. At the end of 1864, I asked the Minister General Raphael a Ponticulo for the faculty of receiving in the Order and of directing the Fraternities. Those faculties were given to me. In 1865, in the parish of Portneuf, of which I was pastor, I organized a Fraternity of the Third Order of St. Francis, which was no doubt one of the first regular Fraternities in Canada after the disappearance of the Recollect Franciscans. The following year I expressed to the superiors of the First Order the desire to see the Observant Friars Minor return to Canada, but the time for that had not come."

"I see, Father, that you are a true son of St. Francis."

"True? I don't know. But I know that I have a great love for the Third Order and the Order of Friars Minor. I also love the Holy Land very much. When I visited the Minister General in Rome, he told me that the bishops of Canada had already communicated with him several times with a view to renewing the early Franciscan tradition, since the first missionaries in Canada were, on two different occasions, your Recollect brethren in St. Francis."

"Yes, I know. I read about their heroic history in the writings of Le Clercq, Sagard, Hennepin and Crespel, at the Bibliothèque Nationale five years ago, when I was working with Father Marcellino da Civezza, the historian of the Franciscan missions. Their story moved me to tears. And when I hear you speak of Canada, I feel drawn to it still more."

"Coming back to your plan, Father, last May I asked the Minister General for a Father who might visit the Fraternities of the Third Order in Canada. This Friar might at the same

time make a special collection for the Shrines of the Holy Land. The Father General gave his whole-hearted approval to this project. To make the collection in Canada — since you were supposed to be occupied in France — at first Brother Liévin was mentioned: he is well known, he could prepare the ground for a future Commissariat of the Holy Land. I advised the Minister General rather to send Father Léon Patrem: the people would have still more respect for a priest, and a preacher would do more good in Canada than a lay brother. Moreover, as one of the Discretes of the Holy Land, Father Léon would exercise greater authority. I suggested Father Léon because I knew him better: we had outlined some plans together in Jerusalem. He has just written me from Peyrat-le-Chateau, and he notified me that you would visit me at my hotel, Father, and that he would come to see me in two or three days."

"All that you tell me is extremely interesting. You have more information than I have about the prospects of a foundation in Canada. The plan of establishing a Commissariat of the Holy Land there, if possible, pleases me very much. I see that your interviews with the superiors of the Order have not been unfruitful."

"I would even have liked to be given official charge of the interests of the Holy Land in Canada, but the project must be allowed to mature. However, when I return, I intend to found a magazine devoted to the Holy Land or a little monthly magazine for the Third Order. I already edit a scientific journal, *Le Naturaliste Canadien*, for botany and entomology are my hobbies. The Holy Land magazine will in a way be my favorite hobby. Our people must become fascinated with the work of the Holy Land, that first and foremost of all missions. Father Léon has promised to supply me with articles."

"His recently published *Tableau synoptique de l'histoire de tout l'ordre séraphique, de 1208 à 1878* proves that he will be a capable contributor. If my humble assistance can be use-

ful to you, I can certainly assure you of it, for the glory of the Holy Land and the good of Canada. That country is especially dear to me. In the Holy Land I learned how sincerely the French Canadian people love the good God, and I know what a filial affection they have for their motherland, my beloved France."

"Yes, indeed, our people are good. Most of the clergy are members of the Third Order. At present the Bishops are favorable to the Friars Minor. The Province of Quebec, in the eastern part of the country, is overwhelmingly French and Catholic."

"How would the Bishops of the Province of Quebec look upon a collection for the Holy Land?"

"I believe they would favor it, as long as you have the permission or specific recommendation of the Propagation of the Faith."

"If that is absolutely required, it will be easy to obtain. But the Cardinal Prefect of the Propagation did not have to give special letters of recommendation to my companion, the Very Reverend Father Procurator, and myself, for the simple reason that for centuries the Sovereign Pontiffs have themselves directly recommended in most urgent messages the work of the Holy Land to the charity of the Catholics of the entire world. In a long and friendly conversation, His Eminence gave us both his most paternal encouragement."

"Nevertheless, Father, you will have to use tact and diplomacy with the Bishops of the Province of Quebec. In Rome, I learned by a letter from the Bishop of the Diocese of Quebec that the fine seminary of Rimouski — a new diocese — burned to the ground early in April. All but \$10,000 of the loss is covered by insurance. The Bishops of the Province want to help their colleague to rebuild it. Despite that misfortune, I believe that it will be possible to organize your collection for the Holy Places. You will have all the people's sympathy, for the French Canadians have kept a very vivid

memory of their apostles. Their faith is more fervent than you can imagine. You will receive an excellent welcome."

"Father, I cannot thank you enough for your valuable information and for your encouragement, which I greatly appreciate. My plans are made by my superiors. It is up to them to decide whether to send anyone to Canada and whom to send. But I will not fail to convey to them your noble and lofty ideas."

"If you come to Canada, I shall be very happy to receive you in my home in Cap Rouge near Quebec City."

After a warm handclasp, the Abbé Provancher and Father Frederic bade each other farewell. On that day the Vicar Custodial returned to the Commissariat of the Holy Land with a burning heart, like the disciple of Emmaus.

He immediately informed his superiors about his interview with the Abbé Provancher. Matters then moved rapidly. Since Father Frederic left Jerusalem, the Custos and the Minister General had exchanged letters: the visits of the Abbé Provancher, "a worthy Canadian priest who is a friend of our Order in general and is very enthusiastic about the Holy Land in particular,"⁴ had won their favor for the idea of establishing a Commissariat of the Holy Land in Canada, or at least to lay the groundwork for one.

The decisive message soon came from Rome. The obedience, which was written on the Feast of St. Bonaventure, July 14, 1881, confided a twofold mission to Father Frederic regarding the Holy Land and the Third Order:

By virtue of this document and with the merit of holy obedience, we order the Very Reverend Father Frederic, Vicar of our Custody of the Holy Land, to go to Canada to make arrangements with the Most Reverend Bishops of that country concerning the foundation of a Commissariat of the Holy Land and the institution in their respective dioceses of the collection prescribed by the Sovereign Pontiffs in favor of the Holy Places, which have been confided to the guardianship of our religious and the needs of which are becoming more and more urgent. Furthermore we

appoint the same Father Visiting Commissary of the Third Order so that he may visit the fraternities of the Third Order which have already been established under our obedience and that he may create new fraternities, if necessary, with the consent of the Ordinaries. For this purpose, we affectionately grant our seraphic blessing to the said Father Frederic, and we warmly recommend him to the kindness of the Bishops to whom he will introduce himself.

When this obedience arrived from Rome, Father Provancher had left Paris (June 19) for England, and he reached Quebec on the evening of July 3, 1881. He believed that it would be Father Léon Patrem who would come to Canada; he announced his coming to one of his friends.

But Providence decided otherwise.

At his home in Cap Rouge, the Abbé Provancher received a letter written by Father Frederic in Paris on July 19:

Due to unforeseen circumstances, Father Léon, who sends you his cordial greetings, cannot go to Canada; and it is your humble servant whom the Very Reverend Father General is sending there as visitor of all the Fraternities of the Third Order under his jurisdiction... I will leave on Saturday the 30th of this month, not from Liverpool but from Le Havre, and from there to New York, where we have several communities of Italian and German religious. So kindly write to me in New York, St. Francis Church, 135 31st Street, and let me know when and how I shall come to your home, where, with God's help, we will try to arrange the matter of the Commissariat of the Holy Land, as well as the editing of the little monthly magazine for the Third Order; at the same time please tell me when I can begin to visit the Fraternities...

Father Frederic sailed from Le Havre on July 30 on the steamer *Saint Laurent*, and after a stormy voyage landed in New York on August 10, where Father Charles Vissani, O.F.M., Commissary of the Holy Land in the United States, was awaiting him.

On his first day in America, Father Frederic heard from the Abbé Provancher. He spent several days in New York

discussing the important needs of the Franciscan Custody with the Commissary. Thus he was able to observe at leisure "the sincere and active faith of the Catholics of America." New York, with its sixty-odd parishes, in addition to the churches and chapels of the numerous religious orders, was a great surprise to him. After having known only the centuries-old customs of old Europe and the changeless habits of the Orient, he suddenly found himself amid a people that was in the full flower of its youth. The religious vitality and organizing spirit of American Catholics made him marvel. A whole new world was opening up before him.

PART THREE

HIS ADOPTED COUNTRY: CANADA

Chapter 13

THE FIRST TRIP TO CANADA

(1881-1882)

On the morning of August 24, 1881, a red-bearded Friar about forty years old, wearing a grey habit, his bare feet shod with sandals, got off a train at the station in Lévis, a town on the right bank of the St. Lawrence River, opposite Quebec City. He did not notice the respectful surprise which his strange costume caused around him.

He walked over to the pier, which is a few yards from the station. He was thrilled to perceive right before him across the river, built on Cap Diamant on a most picturesque site, the city of Quebec, founded by Champlain in 1608, Quebec the cradle of New France, the gateway to the "Kingdom of Canada," the Gibraltar of America.

At about nine o'clock, standing on the deck of the ferry, like all foreign visitors he admired one of the most beautiful rivers in the world which, despite a relatively narrow passage between the two towns, is not less than one mile wide. On this cool and rainy morning, as the ferry approached, the outlines of Quebec City became clearer through the mist: at a height of three hundred feet above the level of the river, on a steep rock, were silhouetted the walls of the Citadelle, the supporting walls of the Dufferin Terrace, and on the right the Archbishop's Mansion, the Cathedral, and the University emerge, while at the foot of the Terrace the lower city rests with its warehouses and business offices and with all kinds of ships moored at its wharves.

But the Friar's gaze was not seeking out specific details. In the emotion of this moment, he was rather contemplating a different vision with his mind's eye: more than two centuries earlier, on June 2, 1615, the Franciscan Recollect Father Dolbeau, who had left his colleagues for several days at Tadoussac with the ship *Saint Etienne*, arrived before the present site of Quebec with Champlain in a sail-boat. Then the scene was one of wild nature. Now the achievements of civilization were evident. Other Recollects, other bearers of the Gospel, followed the missionaries of 1615. "In order to renew the bond of the Franciscan tradition," wrote the Canadian Bishops to the Minister General... Father Frederic was coming only as a scout. The permanent foundation would be made later. His mind recalled the ideas which he had expressed in his last letter to the Abbé Provancher (August 19, 1881):

I am very eager, dear Father, to reach that country where our Friars accomplished so much. I am coming with the desire also to work there, no longer — thanks be to God — to convert, but to intensify the faithful in their virtue, *Qui justus est, justificetur adhuc*,¹ and to be edified by the good and fervent Catholics of Canada. I have great hopes for the success of the mission that I am coming to fulfill among you. After God, it is to you, dear Father, that I will owe most in success. So may the Lord deign to give it back to you a hundredfold already in this life and one day, in the home of the elect — fiat, fiat!

The ferry reached the pier, and the passengers landed. A man went up to the missionary in the grey habit.

"Are you Father Frederic?"

"Why yes, my good sir."

"Father Provancher sent me to meet you in a carriage."

"Father Provancher is always very thoughtful. I am ready to follow you."

"Give me your two suitcases. Is that all you have?"

"Yes, sir. They are heavy, you know. They weigh a good thirty kilos."

"They don't weigh more than seventy pounds," said the coachman, carrying the two valises to the carriage."

"Is it far to Cap Rouge?"

"We have a good three leagues to go. And the roads are bad. We've had a lot of rain lately."

Pounds, leagues! Gradually Father Frederic had to learn the British terms of measurement, which are less logical and more complicated than the metric system.

After crossing the town, the carriage took the Holy Land missioner on the Chemin Saint Louis along the river to Cap Rouge, above Quebec.

Cap Rouge is a pretty village that nestles in a lovely setting of greenery lying at the foot of a bluff, the slaty rocks of which gave it its name. The inlet opens on a valley created by a stream which rises and falls with the tide on the St. Lawrence.

The Abbé Provancher had lived in retirement at Cap Rouge for some years. In 1869 he had resigned his pastorate in Portneuf in order to devote himself to his scientific work, which was to make him one of the glories of Canadian science. After a stay of three years in Quebec, he settled permanently in Cap Rouge, where he acquired a fairly large property close to the parish church, and a home which he furnished.

Being a botanist, he planted a fine garden: lilies of the valley, touch-me-nots, and verbena contrasted their beauty with the utility of the onions, lettuce, and fat pumpkins, under the protection of numerous trees and shrubs. A tree with graftings, which was greatly admired by visitors, bore various fruits. A whole covey of birds made the garden their home. Petunias, geraniums, and such exotic plants as cacti adorned the house's bay-windows. Everything characterized the botanist, gardener, and entomologist whose home it was. The children in the village of Cap Rouge would bring to Father Provancher the insects which they found: butterflies, glow-

worms, grasshoppers, and all sorts of beetles. He would often go through his "estate" with a net in his hand, hunting insects.

He was very hospitable and frequently received visitors in his lovely home. His features radiated joy when he welcomed the Vicar Custodial of the Holy Land. Toward eleven o'clock, Father Frederic said Mass. This was undoubtedly the first Mass celebrated in the Province of Quebec by a Franciscan Friar since those of the last Recollect priest, Father Louis Demers, who had been superior in Montreal and who died on September 2, 1813, at the age of eighty-one years and eight months.

Father Provancher had in Mlle. Julie Julien a typical housekeeper of the good old days: devout and devoted, untiring, able to do all kinds of work, ruling her little kingdom from morning to evening. She blessed Heaven for the privilege of sheltering a missionary from the Holy Land, and still more, after a few days of edification, for the privilege of serving such a servant of God. Another personage in the house — and not the least as to chattering and an alert mind — was Mary Cormier, aged five, a grand-niece of Father Provancher from a Canadian-American family. After her mother's death, she had been raised by her grand-uncle. She quickly took a liking to the Holy Land missionary: he had such beautiful pictures! Soon she was even complaining about his absences from the home, which were too long to suit her. Her amusing comment was: "It's really as if that Father doesn't belong to us."

On the day after his arrival, Father Frederic was introduced by the Abbé Provancher to Archbishop Elzéar Alexandre Taschereau of Quebec, Metropolitan of the entire ecclesiastical province of Lower Canada. The Friar explained to him the threefold mission which had been given to him: to negotiate with the Bishops of Canada for the foundation of a Commissariat of the Holy Land, to establish in their dioceses the annual collection prescribed by the Sovereign Pontiffs in favor of the

Holy Places, and finally, to visit the fraternities of the Third Order which had already been organized under the obedience of the Franciscan Order, and to create new fraternities wherever required, with the consent of the Bishops.

In spite of Father Frederic's respectful explanations, the Archbishop of Quebec thought it advisable to postpone action on the two requests regarding the Holy Land until he could find out the views of the Holy See on that subject. He had personal reasons to insist on an official statement from the Sacred Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith. However, the interview ended with these favorable words of the Archbishop: "Father, when I shall have received the directive from Rome, you will no longer need to labor for this matter yourself, for I will recommend the work of the Holy Land throughout our ecclesiastical province."²

Father Frederic therefore had to write to Rome to request the implementation of the Bull *Inter coetera* of Pope Pius VI, which summarized all the edicts of his predecessors concerning the collections for the Holy Places. This circumstance made it possible for him to extend his stay in Canada. Nevertheless he was granted the faculty of preaching and hearing confessions in the Archdiocese of Quebec at the request of pastors.

He began to write articles for the press from the beginning of his stay in Canada. In them he explained the purpose and the goals of his mission. In one or another he made an appeal for the Franciscan mission in the Holy Land or for the Third Order or the Archconfraternity of the Cordbearers of St. Francis, or even for the Way of the Cross.³

Between the lines of one of these newspaper articles can be discerned the inner suffering that was inflicted on him by some persons who persisted in misinterpreting his mission, when he referred to their "feelings of antipathy, of repulsion, and even of defiance toward a poor friar dressed in sackcloth and girded with a cord who, after a very long and very hard journey, had come to bring from Rome and from the Holy

City of Jerusalem only blessings and consolations and a whole treasury of spiritual wealth!"⁴

In December, 1881, the Archbishop of Quebec received from the Sacred Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith a letter authorizing and recommending the Good Friday collection in favor of the Holy Land, and on March 24, 1882, a circular letter of the Bishops of the Ecclesiastical Province of Quebec ordered that that collection be made every year. Since then, the collection has been made annually — *all as a result of Father Frederic's intervention.*

One day he was also to hear that his journey to France had not been in vain. On January 4, 1882, the Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith notified the Father General of the Franciscans that the Congregation had once more recommended the Good Friday collection in France and had requested the Bishops to transmit the offerings of the faithful to the Commissary of the Holy Land in Paris.

Before achieving the principal goal of his mission to Canada, Father Frederic spent a period of superhuman activity during which he lived through a real epic of spiritual achievements and extraordinary, even miraculous events. For four months, in the dioceses of Quebec, Trois-Rivières, and Montreal, he gave an almost uninterrupted series of sermons, while simultaneously writing articles for the press and publishing booklets.

A few years later he described his first trip to Canada in some magazine articles,⁵ in which he took pleasure in recording his great admiration for and his constantly renewed amazement at the faith of the French Canadian people.

Limitations of space do not permit us to describe everything that he did in those months. The most *sensational* retreat was the first of all, which he preached for a whole week, from September 4 to 10, for the members of the Third Order of St. Francis in the church of the Congregation of St. Roch (today the parish church of Notre Dame de Jacques

Cartier) in Quebec City. The ceremonies took place at eight o'clock in the morning and at seven in the evening.

At his first sermon, the new preacher found the church filled with people. To listen to a talk on religious perfection, he had expected only a hundred persons, but he had "three thousand!" The congregation continued to be large throughout the following days. "The whole town seemed to be like a religious community, and a very fervent one, for with a holy eagerness it found spiritual nourishment in a teaching that was meant only for members of an Order."⁶ The crowd increased day by day, until at the end of the mission the church could hardly contain a quarter of the faithful who flocked to it from all over the city.

The whole town seemed to be going to hear the Holy Land missionary. The retreat at Saint Roch was the subject of conversation in every home; people talked only of Father Frederic. They were attracted by the novelty of the event and also, unconsciously, by the mystery of God's grace. For decades they had not laid eyes on a Franciscan Friar. They were stirred when they saw his bare feet, which some even wished to kiss. They were captivated by the spirit of asceticism and holiness which radiated from him. It was so novel and so beautiful to hear the Holy Land, the home of Our Lord, described by someone who had lived there! They welcomed Father Frederic as an emissary of God. They listened to him as they would listen to a saint, and they said, "Our Lord must have spoken like that!" He preached as though he were giving informal talks. He was so devout, so modest that he seemed like a living prayer. He told stories and gave vivid descriptions of the shrines in the Holy Land. His sermons were long. But, as a contemporary witness admitted, "he could have talked for hours and hours, and the people did not tire of listening to him."⁷ Sometimes his words moved them even to tears. It happened that one day he spoke up to twelve whole hours to an almost permanent audience of thousands of persons who were "drawn only by the impulse of their confident faith."

The newspapers of Quebec gave their readers accounts of the retreat at Saint Roch and reported the seemingly miraculous cures that took place there. The terms used in the articles also betrayed the writers' enthusiasm: "the church was completely filled," "the eloquent Vicar Custodial of Jerusalem," "the tireless apostolic missionary," etc. On September 8, *Le Canadien* reported: "An innumerable crowd is attending the ceremonies of the Third Order retreat. The Chapel of the Congregation is so full that persons standing in the aisles cannot kneel when they wish to. The distinguished Franciscan certainly knows how to attract the faithful by his uplifting sermons. He keeps his listeners on tenter hooks." It was said that mothers who were unable to go to the church early sent their children to reserve their seats, which they took just before the ceremony began.

From five o'clock in the morning until nine at night, Father Frederic did not have a moment free. First there were confessions until eight o'clock, then Mass with nearly everyone receiving Communion and with a sermon that lasted one or two hours, followed by confessions until noon. His lunch was frugal and brief. Crowds of people who were either sick or suffering filled the vestibule and parlor of the rectory to such a degree that the good pastor, Msgr. Gosselin, said that he was no longer the master of his own house. He declared that at least two hundred persons accompanied Father Frederic when he walked from the Saint Roch rectory to the church, literally surrounding him, trying to see him and speak to him. At six in the evening, after a quick supper, he would visit the sick who had gathered in the parlor, as at noon, and then give the main sermon of the day in the overcrowded church.

For the good of souls, Father Frederic led this kind of life for four months, until the day when it pleased God to put an end to his strength and to bring him to the very threshold of the tomb.

People went to him with bold confidence. "He is a miracle-working saint," they said. And they asked him for

miracles. He had brought with him from the Holy Land some precious relics encased in wood from the olive trees in the Garden of Gethsemani. Beginning on Monday, September 5, he announced that there would be veneration of the relics every afternoon for those who would be free to come to the church. By two o'clock on the next afternoon a large crowd had already filled the church, making it impossible to move through the aisles or even in the sacristy, where the latecomers had gathered. The ceremony of the veneration of the relics lasted four hours: it is estimated that eight thousand persons took part in it. Two miraculous cures were attributed to the veneration of the holy relics; a blind young man recovered his sight, and a Mme Goudreau, whose legs had been paralyzed, after venerating the relics, arose, walked back to her place in the sacristy, and then, so intense was her emotion, she went to speak to the missionary in the sanctuary of the church, to the amazement of everyone present. Later she walked home without any assistance whatsoever.

This lady, following Father Frederic's instructions, had recommended herself to Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows. As a token of her gratitude, she gave to the missionary a gold watch which she valued a great deal. On his return to Jerusalem, Father Frederic deposited the little Canadian watch at the feet of Our Lady of Calvary.

The sudden cure of this paralyzed woman created a sensation in the city. Henceforth the sick and infirm flocked to the church and the rectory.

The news of the amazing cure spread even as far as La Malbaie and the Saguenay region, as is shown by the following incident which occurred, no doubt on Friday, September 16, at the Abbé Provancher's home in Cap Rouge.

At nine o'clock in the evening of that Friday, a carriage was heard outside the house. It stopped before the door. Someone knocked.

"Who can be coming to see us?" asked the master of the house. "Shall I open the door, Father?"

"Yes," said Father Frederic. "Who knows whether the good God is not offering us a good deed to do?"

When the door was opened, a very plainly dressed lady in her fifties came into the parlor, holding the hand of a boy of about eleven. She was accompanied by a younger woman.

"Is the Father from the Holy Land here?" she asked.

"Yes," replied Father Frederic, "here is your humble servant. What can I do for you?"

"Father, I have come from the Saguenay, where I heard about the cure of the paralyzed lady. I too would like to be cured of a serious illness that I have — both I and my little boy here."

"My poor child, are you not tempting the good God in doing this? From your appearance, you hardly seem to be endowed with wealth, yet you have nevertheless just undertaken, in this late time of year, a journey of more than 100 miles, to search out a poor religious whom you risked not finding either at this place or at this time."

"Excuse me, Father. I am not rich, but I am not quite poor either. I was able to afford the expense of the trip, but I have a number of children. Does not the law of the good God oblige a mother to raise her children herself, Father? I do not want to give them over to a stranger. But to raise them myself, I must be able to see them — and the doctors declare that I am going blind. My little boy's condition is even more alarming than mine. Father, I have confidence in God, and if you wish — you have come from the Holy Land — you can heal us. So I have come to venerate the holy relics — and you must heal both of us, Father!"

She had spoken with such simplicity and faith that the persons who lived in the house were deeply moved. All of them said a short prayer together to Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows of Calvary, a devotion which Father Frederic was advocating in his missions at that time. "The Father from

the Holy Land" applied the holy relics to the eyes of the child and of the mother. He suggested a novena for them to make. And they left in the carriage. As a result of his surprise and his emotion, he forgot to ask the mother for her name and address, for everyone was hopeful that so great a faith would not go unrewarded. Fortunately the local coachman recognized the young lady and promised to find her home in Quebec City.

Eight days passed. The following Friday, again at nine o'clock in the evening, someone knocked at the door. Father Frederic himself opened and recognized the coachman, who said to him joyfully:

"I have some good news, Father."

"Please come in, dear sir, and tell it to all of us, if you can."

"I found the interesting lady who visited you last week at the home of the young woman, who is her niece. On returning to the city, she began the novena to Our Lady of Calvary with her young son, and she stopped using all the medicines which the doctors had prescribed. You remember the really pitiful condition of the mother and son. They were both threatened with lifelong blindness. Well, their eyes are perfectly healed! There is no more discharge. Their eyelids are quite normal and their eyes are clear. Isn't that a miracle, Father — and a very fine miracle?"

As for Father Frederic, he saw in this incident the fulfilment of the words which the Divine Master pronounced when He laid a curse on the sterile figtree: "All that you shall ask in prayer with faith shall be granted to you."

The retreat at the Church of Saint Roch, which had begun on a Sunday, ended on the afternoon of the following Saturday, September 10, 1881, with a ceremony in which, after undergoing a very strict preparation, one hundred persons were given the habit of the Third Order of St. Francis, while another hundred were professed.

The entirely spontaneous and marvelous demonstrations of popular faith and devotion which occurred during this retreat remained indelibly impressed on the memory of all who participated in it.

Yet all this was surpassed by an extraordinary explosion of faith that took place on the following Monday: throughout that afternoon the Church of the Congregation of St. Roch was invaded by such a gathering of men as Father Frederic had never seen before in his career as a missionary. In order to satisfy the desire of thirty to forty thousand persons who wanted a souvenir of the Holy Land, Father Frederic had announced that he would apply the sacred relics of the Holy Land to all the religious objects that would be confidently presented to him in the church and that might then be kept at home. He especially wanted all the men to obtain small crosses which would be touched by the relics and which they would thereafter carry in memory of the mission. Some persons believe that this marked the origin of the custom of wearing small crosses made of black wood, surmounted by a figure of Christ and encircled by a yellow copper band, which were called "Father Frederic's crosses."

The ceremony of the blessing of religious objects took place on Monday afternoon, September 12, 1881. At all the services on Sunday, it had been announced that this ceremony would be simply a private meeting, and that one person could bring the objects to be blessed for a whole group. The men were especially not expected, as it was a working day. But when at one o'clock in the afternoon Father Frederic calmly walked to the church, under the impression that he would find there a small number of persons who were not working, with their religious objects, he saw the sacristan coming to him quite alarmed by the crowd that was pressing its way into the church:

"Father," he said anxiously, "accidents may happen. The chapel cannot contain this crowd. Men especially are packing in and occupying every inch of space."

In fact the crowd was so great, and the quantity of religious articles so enormous, that Father Frederic applied the Holy Land relics to whole piles of objects massed along the entire length of the altar rail. He passed up and down the rail, blessing and touching the relics to the articles — and this ceremony continued without interruption for about *five hours*. It was said that the stores of Quebec and Montreal were not able to supply all the crosses for the men and that some had to be ordered even from the United States. Without exaggeration, the number of religious articles — crosses, rosaries, medals, pictures, etc — which were thus successively touched by the precious relics of the Holy Land was estimated at several hundred thousand.⁸

Father Frederic attracted crowds from the very beginning of his ministry. "A triple halo seemed to appear around the head of this man: that of the first missionaries to Canada, that of the sons of St. Francis, and that of the Fathers of the Holy Land. This was more than was needed to arouse the enthusiasm of a people that can always be stirred by generous inspirations."⁹ But, we may add, if this triple halo shone so brightly, it was because it encircled a head that was already radiant with holiness.

After the tremendous success of the great retreat at St. Roch, which remained celebrated, and after several days spent in Quebec City, Father Frederic returned to Cap Rouge. The tumultuous surging of the crowds around him was at last followed by a delightful solitude which, at least twice, was interrupted by charming visits with smiling children. Here is his own account:

One evening while I was in my pleasant retreat at Cap Rouge, preparing for new missions, I saw a group of young girls — about ten or twelve of them — come to our little residence. They were small peasant girls, simple and modest, but not at all timid, who had come from the next parish [no doubt Saint Augustin] to visit the poor missionary from the Holy Land. The leader of the little caravan greeted me with these words:

"Father, after our day's work, my companions and I have come to ask you to give us a spiritual sermon."

"I am edified by your pious request, my dear children, but I believe that it is not customary, even in Canada, to give sermons in private homes. So it is rather an informal talk about the Holy Places or a little lecture, as they say here, that you want from me."

"Whatever you wish, Father, but we were hoping that you would be so kind as to give us a sermon to teach us how to love the good God more, Father."

Father Frederic spoke to them for nearly two hours about the fundamental virtues of a good Christian woman. The girls were obviously satisfied when they withdrew, and they promised to love God more.

"I found this frank, simple and solid piety everywhere later in Canada," Father Frederic added, "but in a specially charming way a few days later, at the beautiful convent-school of Sillery."

Near Quebec, on the banks of the great river, in a delightful site in the shade of some majestic trees and amid numerous and varied plants, the Sisters of Jesus and Mary direct a private school for girls. In 1881 it was only a boarding school. At the invitation of the chaplain, the Rev. Octave Audet, a friend of the Franciscan Order, Father Frederic went there with Father Provancher on September 17, 1881, the Feast of the Stigmata of St. Francis. The visit took up most of the day: Mass, a "magnificent" two-hour instruction to the nuns "on the great advantage of the religious vocation," veneration of the relics from the Holy Land, and then to the pupils another two-hour talk on the Holy Places and on some miracles which he had personally seen, followed by another veneration of the holy relics. After lunch, the Mother Superior led her guest to watch the children's recreation. Everything was novel to a European: both the games and the way they were played. And the missionary recorded his astonishment: "They played with a verve and freedom and overflowing joy that are unknown in our large boarding-schools in Europe. How happy we are when we love the good God and we serve him with all the simplicity of our hearts! And how good is the God of Israel to those whose hearts are true!"

All the young ladies thronged around the missionary from the Holy Land with a childlike simplicity, and one and all positively insisted that he must prophesy their future:

"Please, Father, let me know my vocation. Tell me whether I am called to live in the world or whether the Lord is calling me to the religious life."

The Mother Superior had to intervene with all her authority to bring these holy indiscretions to an end.

Had these girls guessed that Father Frederic had the spirit of prophecy regarding vocations? Many persons attributed this gift to him during his lifetime. Even today people are found who say: "When I was young, Father Frederic visited our home. He blessed me, made the Sign of the Cross on my forehead, and said: 'Later on, you will be a priest' — 'you will be a Franciscan' — 'she will become a nun.'" And the prediction came true. Once he said of a boy, "He will be one of us later," and actually he became a very active Tertiary, assisting the Fathers of the First Order.

The chronicler of the Sisters' school expressed her admiration in recording this visit of September 17, 1881:

Good Father Frederic stayed for lunch with our Father "under the trees," and his lunch consisted of a plate of soup and a potato. He fasts every day, and since he has been in Quebec, which has been three weeks, he has not yet slept in a bed, but takes his rest on the floor. He left at about three o'clock, leaving all of us edified and in a magnificent disposition for sanctity!

On the next day, Sunday, the parish of Saint Augustin de Portneuf held a solemn celebration of the Feast of the Seven Sorrows of Our Lady. Father Frederic was invited to speak there. He gave two stirring sermons, one at the Mass on Jerusalem and the Holy Places, and the second at Benediction in the afternoon on the Way of the Cross. A number of persons from the neighboring parishes had joined the parishioners of Saint Augustin. A reporter of the Quebec City *Canadien* was present and wrote an account of the day: "There

was a crowd at both ceremonies. The church was literally full. Everyone wanted to hear the eloquent Vicar Custodial of Jerusalem." While expressing some awkward praises of Father Frederic's "eminent sanctity," the newspaperman recorded the following "little indiscretion" concerning his austere mortifications:

To have a correct idea of the penances which he imposes on himself, one must have seen him at a meal, as we have. We wonder how it is possible for a man with such a weak constitution to endure so much self-denial. A little soup, a small piece of bread dipped in some bouillon, and a few spoonfuls of apple-sauce — that was his lunch. And the Reverend Father Provancher, the editor of the *Naturaliste Canadien*, who was sitting at the table with us, said that the Father never eats more than that.

The reporter included this item of news in his account: "The saintly missionary is leaving our city (Quebec) today for Trois-Rivières, where he will be staying for some time."

However, Father Frederic spent the whole week at Cap Rouge, where he wrote two long articles: the first, to correct some inaccuracies in the report of the day at Saint Augustin, was on "The Functions of the Very Rev. Fr. (Vicar) Custodial in Jerusalem. The Work of the Holy Land," and appeared in *Le Canadien* on Monday, September 26, 1881; and the second, for the purpose of information and propaganda, was on "The Way of the Cross and the Franciscans. — The Seraphic Cord-bearers," which was published in *Le Courrier du Canada* on September 25 (and also in *Le Canadien* on the 27th).

In one of his sermons of the retreat at St. Roch, Father Frederic had offered his life for the salvation of Canada, "his beloved Canada," as he often said. The good God did still more: He left him his life, but He allowed calumny to strike at his reputation and his security. The incident which was the cause of his sudden departure from Quebec City occurred a few days previously.

Before beginning to bless the religious objects on Monday, September 12, as mentioned above, he gave a short talk on the

modern errors of thought that were then threatening to invade Canada, including among others the kind of liberalism which had been condemned by Pope Pius IX. In this talk he exclaimed:

If all the countries in Europe are sick today, it is due in large part to the great evil of liberalism. That disease is doing great harm in France. It prefers to attack children, for thus the liberals hope to reform society. They don't want God in the schools any more. They take away the crucifixes and pictures of Mary in order to teach the children to blaspheme something which they know nothing about..... Let us therefore fight against that enemy. Let us be true Catholics — and liberalism will never take root in Canada.¹⁰

These words exploded like a thunderclap on a beautiful summernight. It must be remembered that this was a time when the question of the "undue spiritual influence," involving all aspects of the subject of liberalism, was being warmly debated in French Canadian politics.

Father Frederic's reference to liberalism shocked some over-sensitive persons who were unable to grasp his meaning. As a foreigner who had just arrived, he did not know that in Canada, as also in Great Britain, there were two great political parties: the Conservatives and the Liberals. The latter felt that his criticism was aimed directly at them. They immediately took offense and spread the word among their credulous friends that the Liberal Party had been denounced in the pulpit, and they accused Father Frederic of having taken part "in politics — and in bad politics — in an unfortunate speech."

This incident was written up in the newspapers. Typical was the following article entitled "A Change of Opinion:"

Last week two businessmen met in the Lower Town, and their conversation dealt with the great retreat that has just been preached by the Rev. Father Frederic.

One of them asked the other:

"What do you think of our missionary's sermons?"

The second replied:

"Magnificent! He is a learned man. You know, he has a friendly tone that moves the most hardened hearts. I like him very much."

The first speaker continued:

"Did you hear the talk which that Reverend Father gave this afternoon at the Church of the Congregation of St. Roch?"

"No," answered the other.

"That's a pity, for you missed one of the best sermons I have ever heard."

"What was his topic?"

"He spoke about liberalism, and he showed us the immense harm that is being done by that pernicious doctrine."

"Well then, I don't like that Reverend Father any more!" ¹¹

This affair assumed such importance that Father Frederic felt obliged publicly to express his surprise in a long letter that was printed in the newspaper *Le Canadien* on September 17. In it he first clarified the confusing of "religious liberalism" with "political liberalism." Then he solemnly declared that he had no intention at all of taking part in politics, but that he had simply explained the teaching of the Church and of Pope Pius IX concerning the perfidious philosophic error which had been ruining Europe for half a century, and that it was his duty to warn the people of Canada about the dangers by which they too were threatened.

Father Frederic was far from thinking that he would ever experience, to his discomfort, the truth of the Comte de Montalembert's saying: "No matter whether you have nothing to do with politics, you are nevertheless affected by politics."

Now it happened that Archbishop Taschereau of Quebec was connected through relatives with the Liberal Party. Father Frederic's words caused such a stir, and the newspapers and the Liberals created such a furore, that the Archbishop is

reported to have been disturbed and to have forbidden Father Frederic to preach any more in the Archdiocese. This was the most painful humiliation in the Friar's life. Some months later, however, the matter was cleared up: Father Frederic was called back to Quebec by the Archbishop and his innocence was acknowledged. Subsequently, even if the incident was mentioned in his presence, he never said an unpleasant word about the Archbishop.

He therefore had to leave the Diocese of Quebec in intense humiliation, yet with confidence in God to whom his good faith was known. This apparent disgrace was the providential impulse that was to lead him to Cap de la Madeleine.

He was to find a warm welcome in Trois-Rivières. The Bishop of that diocese, the Most Reverend Louis François Laflèche, was an intimate friend of Father Provancher. This prelate had a forceful personality, and his anti-liberal doctrinal as well as political convictions were well known. He welcomed the Franciscan missionary from the Holy Land with open arms when Father Provancher introduced them to each other. He even accepted the plan of establishing a Commissariat of the Holy Land in his episcopal see in the near future, if Divine Providence made the project feasible. The Franciscan Tertiaries of Trois Rivières had already invited Father Frederic in his capacity as extraordinary visitator of the Third Order some time ago, and were now eagerly awaiting him.

He was not idle in the Diocese of Trois Rivières. He gave nearly one hundred talks in five weeks. On the very day of his arrival, Saturday, September 24, 1881, he went to the parish of Bécancour on the other side of the St. Lawrence River, and on Sunday morning delivered three important sermons which laid the basis for a future fraternity of the Third Order. That afternoon he returned to Trois Rivières, where at five-thirty he inaugurated with another sermon the Tertiaries' solemn novena in preparation for the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi.

This novena coincided with the ceremony of the official visitation of the fraternity and with the annual retreat of the

Ladies of Charity. He therefore had a very heavy schedule: three major talks each day to the Ladies of Charity, with the rest of his time given to confessions, veneration of the relics from the Holy Land, and attention to the many sick persons who came to church. In the evening he preached in the Cathedral to a large congregation.

As in Quebec City, this retreat was followed with extraordinary fervor. The very popular sermons which Father Frederic gave at the Cathedral aroused widespread enthusiasm. After the sermons, such crowds went to confession that men were even seen holding onto the confessionals in order not to lose their place in line.¹² The shopkeepers of Trois Rivières were unable to satisfy the demand for ebony or copper crucifixes, St. Francis cords, and medals.¹³

The closing day of the novena and visitation of the Third Order was a superhuman feat. Except for a ten-minute interval for lunch and a few more minutes for the evening meal, on that day Father Frederic remained in the church for more than fourteen hours. From eight o'clock in the morning until half past ten at night, he was busy, either distributing Holy Communion, speaking in the pulpit, having the relics venerated, or receiving people into the Archconfraternity of the Cord-bearers of St. Francis: fifteen hundred in the morning and another thousand in the evening.

We can well imagine that after such a novena the preacher's nerves were strained. His body was extremely weak. And his lungs — which one of his best benefactors called "steel lungs" — were almost shattered by the fearful ordeal. But what did that matter? He had this consolation: "Some good had been done in souls — may God be a thousand times blessed for it!"¹⁴ Moreover, he had earned the veneration of the entire population of Trois Rivières. The *Journal des Trois Rivières* had written of him on September 29: "This distinguished religious from the Holy Land is one of the most persuasive preachers that can ever be heard. The mere sight of him was a sermon. Everyone who saw him at

meals was amazed that a man could expend so much energy with so little nourishment to make up for it, so that people everywhere were declaring that he was a saint who was already partly emancipated from the laws of nature."¹⁵.

Two days after the end of the exhausting double retreat, he began a series of visitations of isolated Tertiaries, and of sermons and retreats in parishes of the Diocese of Trois Rivières (several of which now belong to the Diocese of Nicolet): Saint Medard de Warwick, the little mission of Kinsey Falls, Sainte Victoire de Victoriaville, La Pointe du Lac, Saint Grégoire, Cap de la Madeleine, Saint Christophe d'Arthabaska; to the school children of the Brothers of Christian Schools of Trois Rivières, to the members of the St. Vincent de Paul Conference, to the Ursuline Sisters in Trois Rivières, and many others.

He brought many new members into the Third Order of St. Francis. And it must be remembered that this was before the adaptation of the Rule of the Third Order to modern times which was effected by Pope Leo XIII on May 30, 1883. At this time Tertiaries followed the strict primitive Rule, which enjoined: the daily recitation of fifty-four *Our Fathers* and *Glorias* with, in addition, the *Miserere* and the Creed at Prime and Compline; the wearing of the large scapular prescribed by Pope Jules II, that covered the shoulders to a width of four fingers and extended over the chest and back down to the waist; together with severe abstinences and numerous fasts during the course of the year.

Through the veneration of the relics from the Holy Land, more than once the Lord granted cures of illnesses, with many spiritual favors.

After this preaching tour that lasted four months, Father Frederic was exhausted. He had found a generous hospitality in the home of Father Luc Desilets at the rectory in Cap de la Madeleine.

Their first meeting occurred soon after the Friar's arrival in Trois Rivières. Luc's brother Alfred Desilets, a notary, inspired by a boundless confidence in Father Frederic's power of intercession with God, had brought his sick child to him, hoping that the blessing of the priest from the Holy Land would bring about the boy's cure. He was charmed by the missionary's humility and simplicity, and decided to introduce him to his brother, who was the pastor of Cap de la Madeleine and Vicar General of the Diocese. From their first interview, Father Luc Desilets was seized with a real veneration for the Friar. He saw in this man of God a powerful collaborator in the project for a Marian shrine at the Cape, which he had only recently begun to plan. Without disclosing his secret, he did not want to yield to anyone the honor of having Father Frederic as his guest.

The Friar's first trip to the Cape was decidedly picturesque, for he went there from Trois Rivières on the river. On the morning of September 29, 1881, the three lay Desilets brothers, Gédéon, a journalist, Petrus and Alfred rowed the Friar downstream in a long canoe made from the trunk of a tree. As the canoe slid smoothly down the royal road of the river, which had been the only path of communication known to the first colonists of Canada, Father Frederic recalled the numerous river trips which the Recollect Franciscan Friars had taken in former times. The weather was ideal. The brisk autumn air had already begun to play its symphony of colors on the leaves in the splendid Canadian forests, and the sun's lukewarm rays were scintillating in dancing reflections on the waters of the majestic river. At this enchanting scene, amid the rippling of the waves, Father Frederic's voice, as he spoke of the distant past, took on a tone of inspiring seriousness which delighted the Desilets brothers. The memory of the Recollect Friars, Canada's first missionaries, lived on in the small chapel (which is today a Protestant church) that they could see disappearing yonder near the dome of the Ursuline Sisters' convent. The town of Trois Rivières close by on the left bank and the beautiful farming country on the right, with

its series of village steeples, were living evidence of the civilization and the faith which the early Friars had planted.

"Last Sunday at Bécancour," said Father Frederic, "I found a most touching souvenir: four of our Fathers are sleeping the sleep of the just there. They died with a pious reputation for sanctity."

"Look, Father, on the left," said one of the Desilets brothers who was rowing, "that is the mouth of the St. Maurice River. The stream divides into three branches and gives its name to the town of Trois Rivières."

And a little farther on, he added:

"Do you see over there on the cliff a little chapel and behind it a larger church? That is where we are going."

Standing on the headland, Father Luc Desilets was waiting for the early morning visitors. The parishioners of Cap de la Madeleine had been summoned for a special Mass, and were assembled before the church door. Incidentally, on that very day at Lyons in France the bells for the large church were being cast.

Msgr. Louis Eugène Duguay, who was at that time vicar at the Cape, later declared:

I will never forget the first impression that Father Frederic made on me when I saw him set foot on land and walk toward Father Desilets. His calm, thin, austere features were those that I had attributed to St. Francis while reading Frederic Ozanam's book on the Franciscan poets. This feeling of admiration and respect which came over me was soon shared by the faithful who were standing around me.

From the rectory at the Cape as his headquarters, Father Frederic's influence radiated throughout the Diocese of Trois Rivières. Wherever he went, he aroused enthusiasm. On November 18, Father Desilets wrote to Bishop Laflèche who had gone to Rome on diocesan business:

The Jubilee and the Forty Hours at the Cape came to an end a few days ago, and so I am free. Reverend Father Frederic preached with splendid results. He is a man of God, a saint, and a scholar. The more one sees that man at close hand, the more one venerates and admires him. He asked me to let him spend some days in the solitude of the Cape in order to prepare his Canadian handbook of the Third Order: I gladly agreed. Here he can be quiet and get some work done. For he works night and day like the most wretched mercenary, with his bare feet and his head always bare, fasting on bread and water three fourths of the time, eating almost nothing, sleeping little, not going out of his improvised cell, making his bed on the floor — yet ever smiling and magnificently good-humored. If you see his Superiors, you can assure them that he is living like a saint... One must live a little with this extraordinary man in order to perceive what virtue, intelligence, heart and nobility there is in him... Father Frederic is a necessary support for us here, and the good Catholics, the clergy, and the Jesuits are describing his mission here as quite providential. How will it be when he will have gone to Montreal in a few weeks? So far he has preached in only six or seven parishes, but with tremendous success everywhere. However, that has been enough to stir people up and make everyone talk about him. They are running after him, as in the times of the saints, and many sick persons are being healed.

Father Desilets also communicated his overflowing admiration to Father Provancher and to the Very Rev. Raphael Delarbre, O.F.M., the Definitor General in Rome. He wrote to the latter:

Father, you sent us here a saint; a saint and a religious of extraordinary power. He preached the Jubilee in my parish and obtained marvelous results, as he also did everywhere he went. We are literally fighting over him. Every day several priests who want to have him, come here, and if he accepted all their requests, it would not be possible for him to concern himself with the mission for which he was sent. The fact is that there has been a large number of surprising cures; but no one is astonished, considering his way of life. Sick persons are seeking him out and following him everywhere, coming even from very distant places. Yesterday one arrived all the way from Connecticut in the United States. He had traveled a good two hundred and fifty miles to recommend himself to the Friar; and today another came a distance of two hundred miles.¹⁶

The sick and the afflicted were therefore hunting out Father Frederic in his retreat at Cap de la Madeleine. They came in such a procession that the good Friar had great difficulty in finishing his handbook for the Third Order. On January 23, 1882, he was to travel to Cap Rouge and Quebec City in order to supervise the printing of his manuscript, but on January 21st he fell seriously ill with an intestinal inflammation and a high fever. His amazing mortifications, his numerous sermons, the long articles which he wrote at night had finally exhausted his strength. His weak condition made him an easy victim of a severe cold which he contracted during a journey to Nicolet on January 17. His illness was brief but so intense that he thought it would end his life.

His health and his labors returned after an extended month's convalescence.

However, in mid-April Father Frederic received a cable: "Return to the Orient without delay. War imminent in Egypt."

On May 1, 1882, he left Canada "with real sorrow in my heart but not without some hope of seeing again that little people that is blessed by God."¹⁷ And on May 3, despite his still unsteady health, he sailed from New York for France and the Orient.

He arrived in Alexandria, Egypt, on June 14, three days after the outbreak of violence during which some Europeans were killed. He spent eleven days there, in danger of his life, with the Franciscan Friars, in order to see how matters would evolve. The Franciscan mission in Egypt was to suffer severe damage. In July the Anglo-Turkish War began. Father Frederic wrote a book about these events: *L'Egypte et les Franciscains*.

He arrived in Jerusalem on July 18, 1882, quite ill.

Chapter 14

THE FIRST COMMISSARY OF THE HOLY LAND IN CANADA

(1888-1916)

It was generally believed that Father Frederic would return to Canada in the fall of 1882, with one or two other Friars, in order to establish the Commissariat of the Holy Land in Trois Rivières. But this return was to be indefinitely postponed for several years, due to a combination of good reasons. Father Frederic's debilitated health had to be restored first of all. Then he had to devote himself to several important projects in his assignment as Vicar Custodial, which was renewed in 1884 for another six years. He suffered a severe illness in 1884, which required a year's convalescence. In 1887 he compiled the valuable *Codes of Regulations* of the Basilicas of Bethlehem and the Holy Sepulcher. Furthermore the Custody had to repair the serious damage caused by the war in Egypt; and its work was also impaired by a lack of personnel. Finally the Bishop of Trois Rivières, although he was in favor of the establishment of a Commissariat of the Holy Land in his episcopal see, continually postponed the project because of pending problems, among others that of the division of his Diocese, which resulted in the creation of the Diocese of Nicolet in 1885.

However, during Father Frederic's absence, the interests of the Holy Land were not neglected in Canada. The Vicar Custodial had wisely made arrangements to ensure their protection. On the day after he arrived at Cap Rouge, August 25, 1881 — it was one of his first concerns — he had asked his

Minister General to grant the authority of Vice Commissary of the Holy Land in Canada to Father Provancher. Henceforth the latter served in that position under the supervision of the Commissary of the Holy Land in the United States, collecting the contributions of the faithful for the land of Jesus Christ. Moreover, the Vicar Custodial had suggested to the Archbishop of Quebec the simplest and most economical method of transmitting the results of the yearly Good Friday collections, namely, to have the sums received in the various dioceses deposited in his office and to send the total amount directly to the Commissary General of the Holy Land in Paris.

In letters which he sent from Jerusalem to his friend Father Provancher, Father Frederic declared that he was always ready to return to Canada as soon as his major superiors should so decide. More than anyone else, Father Provancher wanted him to return. For this purpose he had made a strong intervention with the Minister General of the Friars Minor in the summer of 1882. In 1884 he accompanied the first Canadian pilgrimage to Palestine, and spent five days at Emmaus "talking about Canada with Good Father Frederic," while indulging in his hobby as a naturalist by collecting specimens of herbs and insects. At that time he pleaded for the Friar's return with the Father Custos and then, a few months later, with Bishop Laflèche, whom he interested in the subject again in October, 1886.

But the projected return, which was several times planned, suffered one delay after another. It was finally settled as a result of the decisive and bold negotiations undertaken by an enterprising man, Father Raymond Caisse, procurator of the *Trois Rivières Séminaire* (high school for boys). In the course of a pilgrimage to Palestine, this priest had admired the moral qualities of the official guardians of the Holy Places. On his return to Canada, with the consent of his Bishop he forthrightly wrote to the Minister General of the Friars Minor on October 6, 1887:

Last winter I was the guest of the Rev. Franciscan Fathers at the Casa Nova in Jerusalem. I returned from the pilgrimage with an intense desire to see your Fathers make a foundation in Canada. It was the holy simplicity, the regularity, and the evangelical poverty in which the children of St. Francis still live, that inspired this desire in me. . . (I said to myself:) If we had some children of St. Francis, preaching humility and temperance everywhere by their words and by their example, we would have in them the most powerful remedy against excesses of luxury and drunkenness. With this conviction I went back to my country and to my beloved Bishop. I discussed it with His Excellency, who seemed to like the idea very much. He even stated last May that he intended to have the Franciscans come. His Excellency's objection hitherto has been the poverty of his Diocese, which has just been divided. But as the Fathers in Jerusalem have assured me that they were asking only for the permission to make a foundation, without any financial assistance from the Bishop, His Excellency would no longer have any objection. . .

The favorable moment had arrived. The Minister General consulted the Franciscan Provincial in France, suggested a pontifical decision to the Pope, and communicated with the Custos of the Holy Land, Father Frederic, and the Bishop of Trois Rivières.

At the request of the Minister General of the Friars Minor, Pope Leo XIII therefore renewed, in a Brief dated December 26, 1887, the Bull of Pius VI recommending the yearly collection for the Holy Places in all the dioceses of the world. Bishop Laflèche understood how effective a Commissariat of the Holy Land in Canada would be to assure the success of the Pope's recommendation. Thus a series of letters exchanged between Rome and Trois Rivières led the Minister General to the decision to send the necessary obedience to Father Frederic on April 4, 1888.

On April 18, the day after he received the obedience, the new Commissary of the Holy Land in Canada left Jerusalem with Brother Lazare Fromentin, a lay brother of the Custody, who was to serve as his *socius* (companion).

The Friars in Jerusalem were sorry to see him leave. That they already esteemed him as a saint is demonstrated by the

following eulogy which was sent to Father Charles Vissani, Commissary of the Holy Land in New York, by Father Godfrey Schilling, a good friend of Father Frederic who was destined to become Commissary of the Holy Land in the United States and to found the famous Mount St. Sepulcher Franciscan Monastery in Washington, D.C.:

I must inform you of the departure from here of your regular correspondent, the Rev. Frederic Janssoone, O.F.M. About two weeks ago he received orders from the General to go to Rome. He is appointed Superior at another place and will soon arrive there with some Brothers. Here at Jerusalem he will ever be favorably remembered, as he was a noble specimen of a true son of St. Francis. He especially edified by his childlike piety, unassumed humility, and unwavering confidence in God, which helped him to be cheerful amid the greatest annoyances. The religious community with deep regret saw him depart, as by word and example he had done much for the welfare of them all. May Almighty God bless his mission for the benefit of the Holy Land, and let him meet with many large-hearted benefactors, who under the new circumstances will be most needful to him.¹

Father Frederic stopped for eight days in Rome (from May 1 to 8), and received special instructions from the Minister General. Then he went to Paris. From there he notified his good Canadian friend, Father Provancher, of his coming.

Before sailing from Le Havre on May 26 for North America, he would have liked to see all his relatives again, but the pressure of events seemed to make the visit impossible. On May 21 in Paris he wrote his regrets to his half-brother Jean Baptiste Dumont in Dunkerque:

I was eagerly looking forward to seeing the whole family again before leaving for America. The good God is asking me for this additional sacrifice. For reasons which were independent of our will, our major superiors were unable to send my obediences for my new mission at the time which had first been planned. I am already over a month late. My whole journey from the Holy City to Paris has been made in great haste, and here I am just passing through town, saving as much time as possible. May the holy will of God be done!

Yet he gave his half-brother the hope that he would see the family again in two years, after having organized the Commissariat of the Holy Land in Canada, when he would be passing through France on his way back to the Custody in Palestine. Alas, that plan was never to be fulfilled.

However, during the writer's journey to Ghyvelde in 1950, he was given some interesting evidence — the only original evidence of this kind which he found. Mme D. L., who was still living in 1950, remembered *Father Frederic's visit to Ghyvelde in 1888* very well. She was then eight or nine years old. The Friar came to the little girl's home. (In this case, he must have been able to make a change in his schedule as announced to his half-brother.) Like all children, she was staring at him with open mouth and without moving when her father went to her and urged her to kneel before Father Frederic to receive his blessing. After the missionary from the Holy Land had left, her father used to tell everyone who listened: "A saint visited my home."

On June 8, 1888, Father Frederic arrived in New York, where he hastened to send a friendly greeting to Fathers Desilets and Provancher. The former went to welcome him and Brother Lazare at the Bonaventure Station in Montreal, at about midnight, June 13-14.

When the travelers' train stopped at Trois Rivières at about eleven o'clock the next morning, Canon François Xavier Cloutier, pastor of the Cathedral and future Bishop of the Diocese (1899-1934), was already on the platform to welcome them.

A still more impressive welcome awaited them: at the door of the Bishop's residence all the Canons were assembled, and in the absence of Bishop Lafèche, who was away on a pastoral visitation, the first Vicar General, Canon Charles Olivier Caron, presided over the formal reception. All the members of the diocesan chapter shared the feelings of cordial and very fraternal good will which the Bishop had recently

expressed in a letter to his second Vicar General, Father Luc Desilets:

I have been pleased to hear of the arrival in New York, and soon in Trois Rivières, of the Very Rev. Fr. Frederic and his *socius*. May both be welcome, and may they bring us the blessings that their Fathers of yore brought, more than 250 years ago, to Canada and to the Trois Rivières region! Until I have the pleasure of seeing them, tell them that I pray the Lord to shed His most abundant blessings on them and on the work which they have come to found in my Diocese and which will extend to the entire Dominion of Canada.²

Bishop Laflèche himself linked Father Frederic with such Recollect Friars as Jamet, Dolbeau, Le Caron, Duplessis and many others who, from 1615 to 1849, with the Jesuits, the Sulpicians, and the diocesan clergy, had first planted the Church's garden in the soil of Canada. After the long winter of Protestant intolerance which had intended to smother the seeds of Catholic life, the definitive return of Father Frederic in this month of June, 1888, marked the beginning of a second spring of the Franciscan apostolate in that land.

Upon reaching their new country, the two missionaries from Palestine depended on Providence for their board and lodging. On the day of their arrival they accepted the hospitality of the Bishop's residence, and the following morning, at Father Desilets' invitation and on the advice of the first Vicar General, Canon Caron, they went to the rectory at Cap de la Madeleine.

On that morning of June 15, the Desilets brothers, Gédéon, Petrus and Alfred, as six years before, placed the same canoe at the disposal of the two Friars. On the majestic St. Lawrence River, Father Frederic's voice was heard again by the three laymen; perhaps this time it was more intimate and filled with a profound joy, but its tone was no less fervent in admiration, as he again gave expression to the feelings which he had recently written in a letter to Father Provancher: "May the good God be a thousand times blessed for the great

consolation which, in His goodness, He is granting me of seeing again this dear country where I left the most heartfelt affection of my grateful soul.”³ Later Gédéon Desilets reported: “All of us were as happy as if we had once more seen one of our own family after a long absence.”

And it was indeed one of the Canadian “family” who was coming to take up again the work of his Recollect brethren after a century’s interval, in the very same place where they had labored.

Father Desilets’ offer of hospitality in the rectory at Cap de la Madeleine was satisfactory to both parties. He was at the same time Vicar General of the diocese and pastor of the parish at the Cape, and he found in Father Frederic a providential aid that he needed for his plan to organize a pilgrimage shrine in honor of the Queen of the Holy Rosary. On the other hand, Father Frederic at once found a temporary residence while awaiting the construction of the Commissariat; moreover he was ready to devote his zeal as a preacher to a Marian project.

He had hardly moved in when the news of his arrival spread around and brought a stream of very confident sick persons to the rectory to venerate the relics from the Holy Land.

He had come just in time for the Solemn Dedication of the small old church of Cap de la Madeleine to the Queen of the Rosary on June 22, 1888. It was an important religious celebration with a long and prophetic sermon by Father Frederic on the future of the little chapel as being destined to become a major Shrine of Mary. Above all there occurred a great miracle on the evening of the same day, marking the formal inauguration of the Marian Shrine: the miracle of the opening of the eyes of the Blessed Virgin’s statue.

Father Frederic had not forgotten the cordial reception which the Diocesan Chapter had given him and the kind message which Bishop Laflèche had conveyed to him by his

Vicar General. Therefore on June 18, he wrote to the Bishop, who was absent on a pastoral visitation:

It is with a feeling of the most profound gratitude that we have received the good wishes and welcome and the very kind encouragement which your fatherly heart sent us on the 11th of this month in the letter which Your Excellency wrote about us to Father Luc des Ilets, the Vicar General of your Diocese and our outstanding benefactor.

We have done nothing at all to deserve the welcome which in your too considerate kindness you are planning to give us, Your Excellency, at your residence on your return from the visitation; it embarrasses us very much. However, despite our frailty, with the good God's help, we will strive to correspond to all that is expected of us, in this dear land of Canada which already had won all our affection and in which we have now come to live as our adopted country.

Yes, 250 years ago, Canada and the Trois Rivières area received the poor children of St. Francis who were the first apostles that watered its soil with their perspiration and even sacrificed their lives for it. We are not worthy to walk in their footsteps; but relying on the obedience which sent us, we are determined to expend all our energy and likewise to sacrifice our life, if need be, for the good of souls, in all of Canada in general and especially in the Diocese of Trois Rivières. When we passed through Rome, we received from our major superiors a formal recommendation to perform all possible services and to give all possible consolation, at this time of so painful trials, to its first Pastor, whom we are to consider (and whom we shall always consider) our benefactor, our protector, and our father.

While awaiting Your Excellency's return, we are now at the rectory of the Cape, in the very precious company of Father des Ilets who, as ever, is overwhelming us with all sorts of kindness and favors.

Bishop Laflèche returned from his pastoral visitation on June 25. Father Frederic went to see him in order to arrange his definitive settlement in the Diocese.

The Archbishop of Quebec, who had been named a Cardinal two years earlier, was also making a visitation, from which he returned on July 16. After a preliminary exchange

of letters, Father Frederic went to Quebec City and presented to Cardinal Taschereau his credentials and a personal letter of recommendation from Cardinal Simeoni, the Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith. He was accompanied by his intimate friend Father Provancher, whom he was very glad to see again.

After a short visit to Cap Rouge, he returned to Cap de la Madeleine. On July 21, he sent to all the Bishops of Canada a circular letter announcing the Good Friday Collection and the new position of Commissary of the Holy Land "for all the Dominion of Canada." Due to the size of the country, he was obviously unable to meet all the Bishops, but he was happy to be able to visit several of them: besides the Cardinal in Quebec, the Archbishops of Montreal and of Ottawa, and the Bishops of Nicolet, Saint Hyacinthe, and Sherbrooke. All of them gave him a cordial welcome and allowed him to preach and hear confessions in their Dioceses — all except Archbishop Fabre of Montreal, who rarely granted such jurisdiction to foreign religious; but this restriction was later eliminated.

While arranging his accreditation with the chancellery as Commissary of the Holy Land, Father Frederic also sought a location for his Commissariat in the city of Trois-Rivières.

During the first days after his arrival, Father Desilets had told him confidentially:

"His Excellency has a piece of land that is very well situated. He is inclined to give it to you for your Commissariat. The lot is large enough to build a friary later."

Bishop Laflèche was indeed like an angel of Providence to Father Frédéric. Despite the poverty of his Diocese, he wanted to head the list of the benefactors of the Holy Land. On August 9, 1888, in agreement with the Diocesan Chapter, he made a gift of about 3,400 square yards for the erection of the Commissariat building at the corner of des Champs and du Pont Streets (the present Laviolette and Saint Maurice Streets), so that the Commissariat might be erected there.

But the formal deed of donation was signed only on February 12, 1889.

However, construction began on August 27, 1888, under the supervision of Pierre Beaumier, a farmer and carpenter of Cap de la Madeleine, who was later to become known as "the carpenter of Our Lady of the Cape."

The site was a very favorable one: it was located in the fields outside the city, far from urban noises, yet only five minutes' walk from the railroad station, which was a mile from the center of the town. It was on the sandy road that went from Trois Rivières to Cap de la Madeleine, leading to the beautiful parishes of Saint Maurice and Champlain. During the first years this isolation was a handicap to the Fathers' ministry, especially in winter. Their nearest neighbor, at least until about 1902, resided at several hundred yards distance from the Commissariat, facing the seminary grounds. He was M. Gédéon Desilets, the syndic of the Holy Land Commissariat and the future syndic of the Franciscan community. Nowadays the friary is in the center of the greatly expanded city.

The building, which was made for three or four religious, had a modest appearance. It was merely an ordinary Canadian wooden house. Its external measurements were 42 feet in length by 31 in width, with a stone foundation and a cellar of the same dimensions. On the second floor were the cells, the library, the sacristy, and the small and very plain oratory, the atmosphere of which was charged with the Friars' love and faith. This second floor was an oasis of holy solitude from which all but the religious were excluded. The ground floor had eleven rooms, including the chapel of the Holy Relics at the entrance, the Commissary's office, and the parlors. Later a covered gallery, 72 feet long by 12 feet wide, was added, leading from the street to the chapel. This impressive corridor raised the thoughts of persons passing through it to the supernatural world, for it was decorated on the interior with inscriptions and pictures of Saints of the Franciscan Order, and it soon became known as "the Gallery of the Saints."

Above the entrance, under a Holy Land Cross and the coat-of-arms of the Order painted on carved wood, the words *Commissariat de Terre Sainte* (Commissariat of the Holy Land) were inscribed in large letters.

The Commissaries of the Holy Land in the principal cities of Europe and America serve as links between East and West. They are the official representatives of the Custody. Their special mission is to gather the contributions received in the yearly Good Friday collection and the spontaneous offerings of the faithful, to spread devotion to the Holy Places by sermons, to make the work and needs of the Custody known to the world, to explain how the contributions are used, and to publicize the unique spiritual privileges which the Holy See has granted to benefactors of the Holy Land.

The foundation in Trois Rivières was proceeding too smoothly — it needed a divine consecration: the cross. Father Frederic wrote to the Abbé Provancher on September 7, 1888: "The establishment of the Canadian Commissariat has begun with a very great cross for me; but this is a sign that it is the good Lord's work. Did not our Seraphic Father ask only for crosses for himself? Could the children have any other desires than those of their Father?"

This trial was the sudden death of a great friend and benefactor: on August 30, 1888, Vicar General Luc Desilets died in the home of his brother Alfred in Trois Rivières, at the age of fifty-six. One month before, he had suffered an alarming heart attack. His funeral was attended by many priests and by such an immense crowd of the faithful that the church could not contain all of them. Bishop Laflèche was deeply moved when he gave the eulogy. He wrote to Father Provancher: "I can in all sincerity testify that he was in truth a good priest, endowed to a remarkable degree with gifts of mind and heart. Like the good servant, he devoted his precious talents to the defense of truth, the glory of God, and the salvation of souls." ⁴

After Father Desilets' death, Bishop Laflèche appointed as pastor of Cap de la Madeleine Father Duguay, who had been vicar, and he asked Father Frederic to stay at the rectory in order to help in settling the parish's financial problems and in receiving pilgrims. Over a period of fourteen years, with Father Duguay, the Friar was to organize and conduct the pilgrimages, while also working for the Holy Land.

For he did not abandon the Commissariat house in Trois Rivières on account of the Shrine. He often traveled between that house and the rectory at the Cape, most of the time on foot. He would return to the Cape the next morning and take up his work there again. Sometimes he would go and return in the same day. The distance each way is a good four miles.

At the end of three months and a half, he lost his first companion: Brother Lazare returned to the Holy Land on September 28, 1888. This devout — even over-devout — religious was more suited to be a hermit than the companion of a Commissary of the Holy Land whose duties require constant contacts with the world; Brother Lazare did not want to see or speak to anyone, and he lacked good judgment.

However, two other religious arrived from France on September 11, 1889: Father Fulcran Berthomieu de Lacoste and Brother Florian Voussure, who had taken his simple vows in 1887. On the next day Father Frederic took possession of his new residence, which had cost \$3500. His two assistants were taken away from him by the formal restoration of the Franciscan Order in Canada in June, 1890, when the first friary was founded in Montreal.

For several years there was a lack of personnel at the Commissariat in Trois Rivières. Several lay brothers followed one another; some of them were mere postulants who did not persevere in the Order. But after October 28, 1901, the Commissariat was continuously inhabited, thanks to the presence of Brother Pascal Buisson, who was to leave a lasting revered memory in Trois Rivières.

From the beginning Father Frederic had asked his friend and confidant, the Very Rev. Father Raphael Delabre, Procurator General of the Franciscan Order in Rome, for "religious according to the heart of God," and among others for two friars from the Holy Land and the Province of Saint Louis whom he knew well: Brother Accurse Vervinck of Eccloo, a Belgian, and Father Augustin Bouynot of Jarnac. Both of them arrived in Canada in October, 1892. Father Augustin was sent to Montreal in order to minister to the Italian colony "only for a few weeks," so he was told; but he was to stay there for three years. Brother Accurse remained at the Commissariat of the Holy Land for about three years, nearly always alone, and obliged to go to attend Mass at the seminary school in the morning, as Father Frederic was absent on missions most of the time. He left for France on October 15, 1895, in the company of the Very Rev. Father Provincial Arsène de Servières.

Two Sainly Friends: Fr. Augustin and Fr. Frederic

Four days later, on October 19, Feast of the Franciscan St. Peter of Alcantara, Father Augustin came to reside in the Commissariat. He was warmly welcomed by Father Frederic. They had been together in the friaries in Bourges and Bordeaux and then in Palestine. They were two personalities that were made to understand and to like each other. Destiny linked them as two inseparable companions, two friends in the tradition of Saints Basil and Gregory. Death was to take both of them in 1916 within five months.

Those who knew Father Augustin toward the end of his life will not soon forget the worthy old man's handsome features, with his smooth broad forehead and his rich white beard which flowed in two separate points over his chest.

But his soul was still more remarkable than his appearance. He had numerous traits in common with Father Frederic, the value of which was heightened by the individual characteristics of each.

Both friars had the same unusually active and selfless priestly zeal, the same very admirable and supernatural way of life as religious, the same spirit of peace and meekness, the same infused wisdom derived from the teachings of their religion and above all from the inspiration of divine grace. They turned their veneration for each other into a mutual rivalry in the practice of virtue and the performance of duty. Each in his own way was a personification of kindness. Consequently they were known only as "Good Father Augustin," "Good Father Frederic," or "Holy Father Frederic." Both were filled with intense charity for the sick, the weak and the afflicted. They could not see anyone suffering without being deeply moved. In their simple and utterly supernatural faith, they did not hesitate to ask God for real miracles, and several persons have declared with grateful enthusiasm that they have obtained miracles with the help of their prayers.

Father Augustin frequently assisted the priests at the Shrine of Cap de la Madeleine and in city and rural parishes, but his principal work was to pay regular visits to the poor and the sick. His smiling welcome, his gentle and slow speech, and his charming simplicity revealed that he had a heart of gold that induced others to open their hearts to him. His ministry was a hidden one, yet it was as rich in fruit as in merit. His humble and quiet way of life as a religious and priest was like a peaceful and shady riverside where majestic trees radiate a cool fruitfulness. Father Augustin's penitents greatly appreciated his mildness and patience, for he spent many hours in the confessional and was a good spiritual director. Some of them preferred him to Father Frederic as a confessor because they found him less strict; he was like a "good papa."

On the other hand, Father Frederic once admitted to a confidant that hearing confessions was a real martyrdom for him on account of the responsibilities of a director of souls. His timid nature and sensitive conscience made him feel the need of advisors such as Fathers Raphael Delarbre and Colomban Marie Dreyer. He was very tender-hearted and

conscientious to the point of mental anxiety, not to say scrupulosity. He felt the need of frequent official reassurance regarding his faculties as a confessor, his powers and dispensations as Commissary of the Holy Land. His fear of responsibility made him dread being appointed a superior: "That has been my only fear all my life!" he wrote to Father Colomban Marie in 1903. Yet he had another fear: that of dying as Commissary of the Holy Land. "I fear that more than fire."⁵ But he had to resign himself to suffering that purgatory in this world, for after having served as Commissary for twenty-six years, when he died, he was the dean of all the Commissaries!

Father Frederic was not so communicative as Father Augustin. Upon meeting him, one felt more inclined to respect him than to confide in him. He was an ascetic consecrated to the glory of God and to the salvation of souls. While maintaining a likeable cordiality in appearance, he rarely confided in anyone. He meant what he said, but he did not say all that he thought. In this he showed the influence of his Flemish origin. But his gentleness, which was a delicate blossom of his humility and the fruit of his charity, gave a unique charm to all his dealings with people. It was that virtue which won for him a universal popularity. His intellectual and moral qualities earned for him a widespread esteem, while his extraordinary piety was truly impressive.

These two men of God worked together like two fingers of the same hand. The abilities of each in the apostolate were complementary. It was precisely because one had a full measure of what was not so outstanding in the other that they soon became inseparable. Both labored for the salvation of souls, one in full view of the public, the other behind the scenes. After all, in order to flourish, plants need nourishing chemicals from the soil in addition to the light and heat of the sun. Father Augustin was for private individuals what Father Frederic was for crowds. One might say that when one of them finished his task, that of the other began.

The sight of these two excellent servants of God and of the Holy Land brought to mind "the two olive trees and the two lamp-stands that stand before the Lord of the earth" (Apoc. 11: 4). A reputation for sanctity that has not disappeared is linked to their memory. They are considered the two patriarchs of the Franciscan restoration in Canada. People were so struck by the virtues of both friars that they sometimes indiscreetly wondered which one was the more saintly of the two.

Father Augustin remained continuously at the Commissariat in Trois Rivières from 1895 to 1899 except for the Lents of 1898 and 1899 which he spent in the Diocese of Montreal. After the Lent of 1899 he returned to the Commissariat for a fortnight and then went to Cap de la Madeleine to assist Father Duguay in serving the pilgrims. He remained there until February, 1901, when he left the Cape for Quebec, but he became rather seriously ill and had to be moved to the hospital in Trois Rivières.

From May 1899, until the end of October 1901, the Commissariat was uninhabited most of the time. Fathers Frederic and Augustin spent only a day or two there at long intervals. The syndic Gédéon Desilets kept the key to the house.

However, this situation did not last indefinitely. After their apostolic journeys, our two devout missionaries hastened back to their beloved solitude. The humble Commissariat building then became the scene of their life of virtue, their consolations in prayer, love of poverty, and mortifications in eating and sleeping.

Two Sources of Spiritual Power: Sanctification and Apostolate

Father Frederic's intense spiritual life urged him beyond the limitations of his frail body. Two great sources of power were the motors that drove his soul forward: a preoccupation with sanctification and a preoccupation with the apostolate.

These two forces projected him toward God. In the midst of a very active life he was gripped by a longing for the contemplative life, with a desire to end his days at the Holy Sepulcher or on Mount Thabor. St. Paul's words rose as a spontaneous outcry from the depths of his soul when he wrote to a friend: "For myself personally, I desire only one thing, for which I have been longing for forty years: *cupiens dissolvi et esse cum Christo*" (I wish to depart and to be with Christ).⁶ "I no longer feel attached to anything here below, and I have only one irresistible desire: *cupiens dissolvi et esse cum Christo*."⁷

He asked his major superiors to send only holy religious to Canada. He wanted everyone in his immediate entourage to have a contagious thirst for sanctity. On January 2, 1894, he wrote to Father Raphael:

Brothers Accurse and Léon yesterday took a fervent resolution to live like real saints here in our incomparable solitude, observing a strict silence and keeping themselves at all times, with a joyful heart, in the presence of God. I told them that this was the specific desire of the Most Reverend Father General in order to obtain the tomb of Brother Didace. For that, we must all three be saints by interior mortification, because as to the exterior, our very dear Brothers have a very good appetite!

At that time, Father Frederic was taking measures in cooperation with the chancellery of Trois Rivières, extending even to the office of the Prime Minister of the Province of Quebec, in order to obtain the body of Brother Didace Pelletier, a Canadian Franciscan who died in the odor of sanctity in 1699, and to re-acquire the former Franciscan friary of Trois Rivières where the Recollect Brother was buried.

His love of poverty was reflected in the very plain appearance of the Commissariat building. His habit was simple, poor, and patched, yet neat; but his nearly yellow cloak, which was too short, made him look like a pauper. However, this strict poverty in no way deprived him of the dignity which a priest of God should have, for it was not based on negligence

but on renunciation. His duties as Commissary of the Holy Land permitted him to handle money, for which a Franciscan required a dispensation. He did so in such a discreet way, for fear of disedifying the public, that many people never noticed it. He never made use of this dispensation — which he found painful — in order to obtain some personal advantage.

When in 1888 he returned to the room in the rectory at Cap de la Madeleine which he had occupied in 1881, he found the bed too comfortable, so he made one that was more to his taste: three planks on two wooden supports. Usually, in the rectories which he visited, he did not touch the bed but slept on the floor. At the Commissariat he slept on two planks without even a straw mattress, wrapped in a blanket and having only his small cloak as a pillow.

The food which Fathers Frederic and Augustin consumed was exceedingly frugal. When they were alone, they prepared meals for a fortnight ahead, like Brother Juniper in the *Fioretti*. When they had a cook, they were hardly more demanding. Brother Gonsalve Duval, who was a postulant during those years (1895-1899), has narrated that once when he had forgotten to put any salt in the food, he apologized to Father Frederic for this oversight. The latter said:

“Your potatoes are good, very good. This is the way I like them.”

Another time the Brother put too much salt in the food. When he apologized again for his mistake, he received the same reply:

“Your potatoes are good, very good. This is the way I like them.”

The Brother added: “With such a man, I could remain a cook.”

The Commissariat friary became a spiritual dispensary to which persons who had been wounded by life came as patients. They left it strengthened by encouraging words and advice

and sometimes with a cure. Father Frederic did not say that he performed miracles, but everybody declared that he did. Here is an example.

In May, 1907, Mr. Alphonse Dufresne of Trois Rivières undertook to move the Commissariat building two hundred feet to the north around a right-angled corner. The project ran into difficulties. By the end of the day the building had advanced only five to six feet. Several times its weight made the traction chain break. The contractor was about to lose his patience when Father Frederic arrived and said:

"Mr. Dufresne, are you having trouble?"

"Trouble? I am used to that. But what is really worrying me is that instead of earning money, I am losing it right now."

"Don't worry, Mr. Dufresne. You've done enough today. Tomorrow all will be well. You will have help."

The laborers were dismissed for the rest of the day, as the capstan wheel and the broken chains had to be repaired. At six o'clock the next morning the foreman came to survey the job and to find some way of making it succeed. After he had looked the situation over, he perceived Father Frederic coming toward him and asking:

"How are things, Mr. Dufresne?"

"My health is all right, but I don't know whether the job will be all right too."

"It will go all right today, you'll see. I prayed to St. Anthony today during my Mass, and if he does not grant my prayer, it will be the first time."

At seven o'clock the laborers came and harnessed the horses to the capstan wheel. A son of Mr. Dufresne, who was driving the horses, remarked:

"Father, you know that one of the links is broken."

This link was made of six strands of iron. It was nearly completely corroded: its inner side was open and only one of

its strands was still holding. Normally it would have been considered finished, unusable. There were two ways to replace it: either open it up with a cold chisel or let it burst when the chain was drawn tight by the horses.

The father and son argued hotly over the two methods.

"The link must be cut by cold chisel," insisted the foreman's son, Philippe Dufresne.

"No! No! Let the horses finish it off!"

"But the horses get frightened when the chain breaks. The whiffle-trees hit against their legs."

"Start the horses!" ordered the father.

The young man did not move. He only obeyed at the third command, when his father shouted:

"I'm the boss here!"

Young Dufresne angrily whipped the horses. They were already eager to move, and they set off as though trying to ruin the chain. Everyone present watched it. Although it had already snapped several times previously, this time it held. The weak link did not break. Then everyone looked at the house. It was advancing: soon it had moved five or six feet, and within three quarters of an hour it had covered seventy-five feet. Hitherto jacks had been needed to drive it forward. Mr. Dufresne recovered his good humor. Instead of losing money working for God, on the contrary he was becoming more prosperous and fervent.

This same chain with its link which was considered useless and which was not repaired in any way, was used to move another very heavy house. The link became famous; it was called "Father Frederic's link." While the house was being moved, the chain broke about twenty times, but "Father Frederic's link" held firm. Mr. Dufresne was profoundly impressed. He used to say:

"Father Frederic is a good blacksmith. He solders well."

Mr. Dufresne used the chain for another two years. It is not known what eventually became of it.⁸

This anecdote demonstrates that Father Frederic knew how to help workingmen and that this confidence in St. Anthony of Padua was not in vain.

The Commissariat house was also a center of apostolic activity. As representative of the Custody, Father Frederic's apostolate took on a number of forms. His love for the Holy Land and his love for the Franciscan Order deserve special mention.

His fear of dying while still Commissary did not prevent him from being a model of faithfulness to his regular duties. If the Holy Land meant so much to him as a Franciscan priest, it was because he saw in it, in the radiance of the sun of the Orient, the homeland of the Incarnate Son of God and of His Blessed Mother. As he himself used to say, he always greeted the Holy City as the home of his God and the home of his own soul. Two devotions were dear to his heart: the Passion of Christ and Mary's Rosary, which makes the Mysteries of our Redemption unfold before our eyes. In Palestine he beheld the very scenes where the events of these Mysteries had taken place.

This love of his for the Holy Land, intensified by his personal love for the Incarnate Word and His Blessed Mother, to a certain extent provides the unifying theme of Father Frederic's life. The goal of all his great missions was the progress of the work of the Holy Land, to such a point that he can be considered the greatest apostle of Christ's country in Canadian history.

In order to propagate that work, his ingenious zeal made use of numerous different apostolic means: the Commissariat building, collections in churches or in homes, sermons, books, magazines, veneration of relics, encouraging Canadian pilgrimages, making replicas of several of the Holy Places, and erecting Ways of the Cross in the open air.

The aim of his first journey to Canada in 1881-1882 was achieved: the establishment of the annual Good Friday collection for the Holy Places. And in that connection he published a promotional booklet, which was perhaps the best of all: *Notice historique sur l'oeuvre de Terre Sainte* (Quebec, 1882, 79 pp.).

His zeal in finding benefactors of the Holy Land was intense. In his letters to the Custos, he repeatedly stressed the charity of the Canadian people. In an evaluation which is no doubt disputable, he described Canada as "the poorest country in the world" and yet the most generous: "ask the Venerable Discretory to note that Canada, a very poor country having less than two million Catholics, has given more than 50,000 francs for the Holy Land this year (1890). What country is there which gives more than 25,000 francs per million souls?"⁹ "I am proud of my little Canadian people which is the poorest in the world and which gives more for the Holy Land in proportion to its numbers than all the other countries in the world."¹⁰

In order to serve more effectively as Commissary of the Holy Land in a bilingual country like Canada, Father Frederic realized that he should be able to speak English. And when in 1902 he confided to Bishop Cloutier that he was learning English at the age of sixty-five, His Excellency smiled.

He dreamed of leading a Canadian pilgrimage to the Holy Shrines in Palestine. Another of his dreams was the foundation in Jerusalem of a hospice for Canadian pilgrims, which would be managed by some Canadian Tertiary sisters who were willing to undertake this work.

He cordially encouraged and assisted his great friend, Father Provancher, in organizing pilgrimages from Canada to the Holy Land, which were the first in Canadian history and which were then considered extraordinary undertakings. The secular priest organized four national pilgrimages: in 1884, 1886, 1888, and 1890. He himself led the first one.

Father Frederic also aided Father Provancher in the last major project of that unusually devout and patriotic man, which required six years of efforts on his part: a magnificent painting of St. John the Baptist, the Patron Saint of French Canadians, in the act of baptizing Our Lord. The original picture measured nine by six feet. Forty-two persons were depicted on it in a natural setting on the banks of the River Jordan under an open sky. This work of art was done by Adolphe Rho, a Canadian painter who was well known and highly appreciated at that time, one of the most talented artists in the history of Canada. The painting was taken to Palestine by the fourth Canadian pilgrimage and was hung near the entrance of the Shrine of St. John at Ain Karim. For Canadians who travel to the Holy Land, it still affords today a welcome reminder of their beloved country.

Lacking pilgrimages to lead to Palestine, Father Frederic erected replicas of the Stations of the Cross in order to help the Canadian people to understand the Passion of Our Lord. For him this was the fulfilment of one of his dreams. "I have always hoped to see arise somewhere in America monuments that would represent those in the Holy Land."¹¹ Between 1895 and 1897, he supervised the erection of open-air Ways of the Cross, laid out on lines similar to the Sorrowful Way in Jerusalem, in three places in the Province of Quebec.

The first of the three — the most imposing and faithful to the measurements of the original one in the Holy City — was established at St. Elie de Caxton, a village located 32 miles north of Trois Rivières. In 1895, with the help of the pastor, the Rev. Adelard Bellemare, Father Frederic outlined the Way of the Cross on a wooded hill 300 feet high near the parish church. He gave it exactly the same length as the Sorrowful Way in Jerusalem, i.e. 1700 feet from the first Station to the top of the hill. Each Station was placed at the same interval as in Jerusalem. Due to this Way of the Cross and the

impressive Calvary monument, the hill at St. Elie de Caxton has become a diocesan pilgrimage shrine and, in the words of Bishop Laflèche, as it were "the lightning rod of the whole region." From the hilltop there is a magnificent view across the plains to the St. Lawrence River.

In 1896 Father Frederic founded another Way of the Cross on the river bank near the holy Shrine at the Cape, on a piece of land which Father Duguay bought with his own funds. Because of its proportioned distances, the disposal of the Stations, the form of the grounds, and the erection of several commemorative monuments, it was the most striking copy of the Sorrowful Way in the Holy City. However, due to the limitations of the land, Father Frederic had to reduce by two-thirds the total distance that separates the Praetorium of Pilate from Mount Calvary in Jerusalem. But from the ninth to the fourteenth Stations the distances remained substantially the same. The arrangements of the Stations according to the points of the compass were identical: like Christ bearing His Cross, the pilgrims went from east to west, from the orient to the occident. Scriptural quotations referring to Our Lord's Passion were painted in black letters on a series of white wooden fences along the Way of the Cross which represented the walls of Jerusalem. The whole re-creation of the original was perhaps more popular than aesthetic in style. Between 1896 and 1900, other monuments of the Sorrowful Way were added with the help of Pierre Beaumier, "the carpenter of Our Lady of the Cape." In addition to the fourteen Stations they included the Antonia Tower (a large square tower, painted brown and white, with battlements, and visible from some distance), the Judiciary Gate, the Ecce Homo Arch, and finally a perfect replica of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem.

This last monument meant a great deal to Father Frederic, for he considered it unique in the whole world because of its fidelity to the dimensions of the original. He had its construction financed by subscriptions. He had at first tried to achieve this project in collaboration with Msgr. Marquis at the Tower

of the Martyrs in Saint Célestin (Diocese of Nicolet). That center of pilgrimages is now a national shrine of holy relics. Father Frederic had stated that he was ready to finance the monument "to the last penny," if he had the required authorisations of his superiors and of the Ordinary. But the plan was fulfilled only at Cap de la Madeleine.

The Commissary of the Holy Land collaborated from the beginning in the work of Mademoiselle de la Rousselière for the foundation of the Shrine of the Reparation dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus at Pointe aux Trembles near Montreal. In 1897, in the forest by the Chapel, along the winding paths, he supervised the erection, again on the model of the Sorrowful Way in Jerusalem, of a monumental Way of the Cross, a masterpiece made by the Carli Company of Montreal. Soon afterward he presided at its canonical inauguration. On several occasions he preached there with great success. His reputation for sanctity drew crowds from the city and the surrounding country. With the building of the Chapel, that was the beginning of this popular Shrine, which the Capuchin Fathers have directed since 1921.

Books and magazines were for Father Frederic the best media of propaganda for the work of the Holy Land. Most of his works were written in order to make the Shrines at the Holy Places known, such as his lives of Our Lord, of the Blessed Virgin, of Good St. Ann, of St. Joseph, and his two-volume album of pictures of the Holy Land.

When, during the last years of his life, he once again took up the work of a traveling salesman, as in his youth, and sold his books from house to house, giving the profits to various religious communities, it was understood that he retained a certain percentage for the Holy Land.

In 1890 and 1891 he was unable to achieve a plan which he had been preparing for a long time: the foundation of a monthly magazine of 32 pages entirely devoted to the Holy Land. But in 1892 he succeeded in founding the *Annales du*

Très Saint Rosaire, concerning which he wrote to Father Raphael Delarbre: "This publication, as an indirect organ of the Commissariat, helps the work of the Holy Land by making it known through descriptions of the Shrines."¹² The Holy Land was always to him the living scene of the Mysteries of the Rosary.

On another occasion he wrote:

In accordance with the strong desire of His Excellency Bishop Laflèche, I will preside over all the pilgrimages at the Cape. The *Annales du Très Saint Rosaire* are for me a substitute for a Holy Land magazine. Whenever the Commissariat becomes capable of publishing them, it will do so. At present this responsibility (because of the handling of money) would hurt the Holy Land. My collaboration as co-editor of the *Annales de Sainte Anne* also has as its aim the promotion of the work of the Holy Land. Up to now all my great missions have had the same aim, and I hope, before God, that I have attained it. There remains the restoration of the Order in Canada.¹³

This last project was to be the objective of some of his best efforts.

He laid the preparation for the foundation of the Friary in Montreal. In his letters he supplied the necessary information to the Minister General as well as to the Procurator General, the Very Rev. Raphael Delarbre. He also took several measures in Montreal to sound out public opinion and to discern the psychological moment for the restoration of the Franciscan Order in Canada.

His influence, particularly as a result of his house-to-house visits throughout the diocese in favor of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, served to prepare the way for the foundation of the Friary in Quebec.

Above all, it was he who laid the foundation of the Friary in Trois Rivières. For a long time he had desired to lead the regular religious life there. He made repeated pleas to his superiors to obtain it. In 1902 Bishop François-Xavier Clou-

tier granted permission to the French Franciscan Province to found a regular Friary in his episcopal see beside the Commissariat. The community was formally erected on June 10 of the following year. For its beginning Father Frederic offered the Commissariat building. He wrote to his Provincial: "This will be my humble token of gratitude for the happiness which I already feel in anticipation of at last leading the regular life after fifteen years of wandering up hills and down dales... in the world." ¹⁴

Father Frederic was therefore an outstanding forerunner of the restoration of the Franciscan Order both in Canada and in Trois Rivières. He deserved this beautiful eulogy of his former Provincial, the Most Reverend Colomban Dreyer, who later became Apostolic Delegate to Indo-China:

It is not surprising that such a life was rich in accomplishments. If the Franciscan Order, which had been suppressed in Canada by the English conquest in the middle of the 18th century, came to life again about 1890 and became remarkably flourishing in this country, it is due in large part to Father Frederic who was the first to bring the Franciscan habit back to Canada and who attracted souls by his example, his activity, and his great reputation for sanctity." ¹⁵

Chapter 15

THE PROPHET OF OUR LADY OF THE CAPE

Father Frederic had left a fief of Mary in his homeland on the shores of the North Sea. He found another one in his adopted country on the banks of the great St. Lawrence River. He was to become its prophet before being its herald for fourteen years — half of the last twenty-eight years of his life which he spent in Canada.

He was also the first historian of the present Shrine. In 1897 he arranged for the publication under the signature of Father L. E. Duguay, pastor at the Cape, of a booklet entitled: *Le sanctuaire du Très Saint Rosaire du Cap de la Madeleine. Notice historique sur ses origines et son développement.* It is certain that he was really the author.¹

Making use of this booklet, we shall outline the principal stages of the Shrine's history in order that we may better understand the great importance of the part played by Father Frederic.

Cap de la Madeleine has been a "St. Mary's land" for three centuries. Devotion to the Mother of God began modestly though intensively in the hearts and homes of the first inhabitants of the region. These believers lived in constant danger of attack from the Iroquois Indians, and they attributed their salvation to the extraordinary assistance of the Blessed Virgin, as the people of Flanders did later when they were persecuted because of their religion. Each home had its little shrine dedicated to Our Lady. In those times of continual ambushes and battles without respite, many persons were wounded and

some died. Yet the Mother of God watched over her suffering children in a hospital named Notre Dame de Pitié.

The first priests in the area were the Jesuits and Recollect Franciscans. Cap de la Madeleine was named after the Reverend Jacques de la Ferté, pastor of the parish of Sainte Marie Madeleine in Chateaudun (France). Although he never went to Canada, he nevertheless took an interest in the missions in New France. Thus in 1651 he gave to the Jesuits a manor measuring two leagues in breadth by twenty in depth, on the north bank of the St. Lawrence, for the purpose of promoting missionary work among the Indians and of spreading French civilization. What had hitherto been called the Cap des Trois-Rivières became, in memory of the donor, Cap de la Madeleine, and the parish that was to be founded there was named Sainte Marie Madeleine.

In 1659 Pierre Boucher, the governor of Trois Rivières built on the middle of a redoubt a "20-foot square" wooden chapel on his "St. Mary's land." This humble church was assigned in 1661 to the Jesuit Fathers, who moved it to the banks of the Favrel creek, where the present Shrine stands. They also enlarged it and dedicated it to St. Mary Magdalen. This chapel measured thirty feet in length by sixteen in width and served as a parish church for half a century.

The first resident pastor was appointed in 1685 and occupied the position for forty-four years. He was Messire Paul Vachon, a canon of the Quebec City cathedral. He followed at the Cape the Recollect Franciscans, who had followed the Jesuits. This priest, who died with a reputation for sanctity, has a double claim to recognition in the Marian history of Canada: he erected in 1694 one of the first Confraternities of the Rosary and in 1717 the church which is now the shrine of Our Lady of the Cape.

Monsignor de Saint Vallier, Bishop of Quebec, authorized the construction of a larger and more lasting church than the preceding one on May 13, 1714 (this date is inscribed in relief on a stone in the facade). Because of the great poverty of the

parishioners, the entire colony contributed to the erection of this building which was destined to become a "national Shrine" and to remain one of Canada's oldest churches.

Despite its flourishing beginning, the Confraternity of the Rosary fell into a state of lethargy that lasted for a century. After the death of Canon Paul Vachon (March 7, 1729), the parish of Sainte Marie Madeleine became a mission and remained without a resident pastor for 115 years.

Thus the Mother of God made a definitive re-appearance on the scene. This time she was not to leave it. First she brought her statue and then made a gradual preparation for the first miracles that were to form the foundation of her Shrine.

In 1854, on the occasion of the proclamation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, Mr. Zéphirin Dorval, a parishioner of Cap de la Madeleine, donated to his church a very beautiful statue of Mary, with eyes lowered and lovely features, to be placed on the side altar of the Rosary Confraternity. It came from the Carli Petrucci Company in Montreal. Its model was none other than Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal as she had appeared to St. Catherine Labouré in 1830. Marvels of grace were to shed glory on this statue, and it was to become a magnet for the confidence of the people. This is the statue which is now world-famous as that of Our Lady of the Cape.

The real instrument of the Marian renewal at Cap de la Madeleine appeared in 1864: it was Father Luc Desilets, who lived there as pastor for nearly twenty-five years (1864-1884, 1885-1888). Like Father Vachon, he was one of the most zealous revivers of parochial life and a foremost advocate of devotion to the Holy Rosary.

Father Desilets was a man of medium height, with square shoulders and animated yet usually smiling and refined features. He bore the honor of the priesthood with impressive dignity. He devoted his talent for fervent preaching and able writing to the service of the Church and of his country. He

received several important assignments, and took a part in journalism with his brothers, who owned the *Journal des Trois Rivières*. More than once he had to hold his own with adversaries. Even if everyone did not agree with his views, all consistently acknowledged his sincerity, perfect loyalty, and great literary ability, as well as his profound and firm piety. Everyone who came in contact with him — his colleagues and his parishioners — felt that he had a heart of gold. As soon as it was a matter of doing a service for someone, he did not spare himself, and his zeal occasionally made him perform heroic deeds. His priestly spirit was so ardent that he forestalled Pope Leo XIII in spreading devotion to the Rosary.

This pastor dealt with good and plain people. As they could not earn a living from the sandy soil, the men took building jobs. They were less devout than they should have been. The parish still suffered from its century of abandonment. Father Desilets could barely find ten just and docile persons among his parishioners. One day therefore he declared in the pulpit: "Since you do not want to listen to me, God Himself will speak to you." Soon afterward a cloud of grasshoppers overran the fields. Fortunately the holy priest drove them away by praying for Our Lady's intercession. People went to gather blueberries on Sunday instead of attending Mass, and during the week they sold in town what they had gathered. "If you gather blueberries on Sunday," said Father Desilets, "next year you won't have any." It is said that the following year there were no blueberries. Such warnings from Heaven finally made an impression on the backsliders and induced the parishioners to use again their rosaries, which they had been neglecting. Father Desilets still hoped that one day his people would become good Christians.

An apparently trivial incident brought about the restoration of the Confraternity of the Holy Rosary in the parish at the Cape, as well as in several neighboring parishes. It marked the beginning of an ever increasing devotion to the Rosary which was destined later to draw great crowds to the Cape.

As sometimes happens in history, it was an animal that served to attract the attention of men to the message from Heaven.

On May 29, 1867, on the eve of the Feast of the Ascension, Father Desilets, despite his fervent pleas, found not a single penitent at his confessional in the sacristy. Before returning to the rectory, he went into the church to tell Our Lord how sorry he was that his parishioners were unable to appreciate such a beautiful Feast Day. There he was amazed to find a dirty swine that had come into the church through the open door and that was chewing a rosary left on the floor in front of the side chapel in which was the Rosary altar! The pastor seized the beads and drove out the beast. But a thought flashed through his mind and struck him forcefully: "Men drop the rosary, and the pigs pick it up!" He fell on his knees before the Mother of God and made a vow that he would consecrate himself to re-establishing and spreading devotion to her Rosary. The next morning, on the Feast Day, he narrated to his parishioners this incident which, in his simple and practical faith, he considered a warning from Heaven. Henceforth he frequently preached to his people about the Rosary, and gave them instructions regarding its privileges and power. Cures occurred and favors were obtained that were a portent of other greater favors.

But an event of another kind soon attracted widespread attention to the small ancient church.

The building erected in 1714 had become too small for the needs of a population of thirteen hundred persons. In 1873 Bishop Laflèche of Trois Rivières asked that a larger one be built. For various reasons the project was delayed until 1877. Stones and financial resources were scarce at the Cape. The parish council decided to demolish the old church in order to make use of its stones in the masonry of the new one, while the rest of the stones would be prepared on the other side of the river, at Sainte Angèle, and would be transported across the river in wintertime on the ice, in order to save money. The necessary amount of stone was assembled during the years 1877 and 1878.

Now it is a known fact that the river does not freeze over every winter. To obtain this advantage, Father Desilets made his entire parish pray. Every Sunday throughout the winter of 1878-79 the people recited the rosary after the High Mass, at the foot of the statue of Our Lady of the Rosary. But no matter how much they prayed, the river did not freeze. January and February slipped by, and March likewise. The season of extreme cold was over. Humanly speaking, a crossing on ice could no longer be hoped for. It was then that Father Desilets made a vow that, if the Blessed Virgin obtained at this late period a bridge of ice that would make the transportation of the stone possible, he would preserve the old church and, with the Bishop's permission, consecrate it to her cult with the title of Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary, and that he would have the new parish church blessed on the Feast of the Holy Rosary as an ex-voto offering to Mary.

On the evening of March 14, 1879, after a week of mild weather, a strong wind from the northeast broke up the ice on the Lac St. Pierre and along the river banks and drove the floes downstream toward the cove of the Cape, where they piled up all the way to the south bank. A passageway was then leveled, swept, and watered in order to make the ice firm. Thirty to forty men worked on it until late at night with very little light yet without the slightest accident. The faith of these men in Mary's protection was such that they labored without any fear amid all the perils. Looking at the light shining in one of the rectory windows, they said confidently: "There is no danger. Father Desilets is saying his rosary: the Hail Mary's are holding us up."

During a whole week, from the Feast of the Blessed Virgin's spouse St. Joseph until its octave, more than a hundred wagons crossed the river, transporting blocks of stone that weighed more than three thousand pounds. As soon as all the stone had been moved, the sun melted snow and ice, and water swept over the passageway.

The faithful instinctively called this marvelous bridge "the rosary bridge," because of the rosaries which the pastor and

the parishioners had prayed. This bridge of ice is a charming miracle of Our Lady granted to the people of Canada, and it is also a symbol of her motherly compassion in giving to our imperilled souls a bridge from the shores of time to those of eternity.

Bishop Laflèche wrote these witty lines in a letter to Father Desilets: "The good God truly favored you in the transportation of the stone for your church. This is a new proof that faith can do all things, even throw a mountain into the sea and one hundred and fifty tons of stone from one side of the St. Lawrence to the other. You have delayed the coming of spring by at least a fortnight. After having duly thanked the Lord, you should ask Him to make up for the inconveniences of this delay."

Such was the marvelous event that everyone was talking about when Father Frederic arrived at the rectory in Cap de la Madeleine in September, 1881. He himself often described this marvel in his sermons when he returned to the Holy Land.

The large new church of Sainte Madeleine had been solemnly blessed on October 3, 1880, the Feast of the Holy Rosary.

"Father Desilets had foresight. Did he envision the evolution of the Marian Shrine at the Cape?" asks Father Paul Emile Breton, O.M.I., in his history of the Shrine. "Perhaps. From 1871 to 1885 he acquired, in the name of the parish, several lots which now form the main part of our grounds." ²

Did he, during the winter of 1882, specifically discuss with Father Frederic the project of a Shrine where the Blessed Virgin would be especially honored, as her mother St. Ann already was honored on the hillside of Beaupré? Did he ask the friar not only for the support of his prayers but also for that of his active labor? It is quite probable. However, it is not clearly mentioned in contemporary documents: in the letters of Father Frederic and Father Desilets which we possess.

Besides, circumstances would have made it difficult for the Commissary of the Holy Land to give effective assistance, for he was already swamped with work. The performance of his mission of a few months in Canada, the continuous requests for sermons, the preparation of the handbook of the Third Order, and his visits to the sick took up all his time. Then his serious illness in January, 1882, brought all his activity to a stop, and was followed by an extended convalescence and his sudden departure from Canada for the Orient in May, 1882. In brief, the providential hour had not yet arrived.

As for Father Desilets, he left for Rome in May, 1883, in the company of Bishop Laflèche, and he stayed there for two years, engaged in a diplomatic mission regarding the thorny problem of the division of the Diocese of Trois Rivières.

It was during this stay in Rome that Pope Leo XIII issued his first two encyclicals on the Rosary (September 1, 1883 and August 30, 1884), ordaining that the Catholic world consecrate the whole month of October to the Rosary devotion. Father Desilets rejoiced. His deepest convictions were triumphing. One day, in the Church of Sant'Andrea delle Fratte in Rome, where the Jew who became Father Marie Alphonse Ratisbonne had been converted by an apparition of Our Lady, a thought occurred to him which he could not refrain from communicating to his Bishop:

Your Excellency, I have a very important suggestion to submit to you... As the Rosary is the salvation of the Church, so it will also be that of the Diocese. Therefore if Your Excellency were to undertake to favor and to encourage in a very special way the Rosary and the organizing of its Confraternities throughout your Diocese, in order to obtain victory over evil ideas in the country, I have a deep and intense belief that your desires would be granted in a striking way, which would also contribute to the honor of God and of His holy Mother. I have hitherto seen too much of the amazing effects of this power to doubt it for a moment. And I will even say that, in communicating this thought to you as a director of that Confraternity for many years, I am serving as an unworthy instrument of the Blessed Virgin.³

Father Desilets was still in Rome when he received his assignment as pastor of the important parish of Baie du Febvre. But he did not allow himself to be attracted by the lure of wealth and honors. On his return to Canada, he seized an opportunity which occurred to take charge again of his former parish at Cap de la Madeleine. He busied himself with the restoration of his "very beloved shrine": floors, walls, vault — all was renovated. The main altar was re-decorated by the artist, Adolphe Rho.

Father Frederic returned to Canada on his second journey on June 14, 1888, and went directly to his "beloved solitude" at Cap de la Madeleine. On the sandy knoll rising from the river bank, which may have reminded him of the sand dunes of Ghyvelde, he went back to the old rectory, which was separated from the "royal highway" (*chemin du roi*) by a ravine measuring eighty feet in width, fifteen to twenty feet in depth, and three hundred and fifty feet in length, that was later filled in by the Oblate Fathers on their arrival. On the plateau overlooking the river he could hear the whisper of its ripples and the murmur or thunder of its waves. He met the staff of the rectory: in addition to the pastor, Father Luc Desilets, there were the vicar, Father Louis Eugène Duguay, two servants, Misses Emilie and Elly Bellefeuille, and the janitor, Majorique Arcand. The friar was indeed surprised to see the major improvements which had been effected since 1882: the old chapel had been restored, the new church had been erected nearby, the grounds had been graded, and a splendid deep-water pier had been built by Senator Hippolyte Montplaisir the year before.

All was ready for the great day: June 22, 1888. It was a day filled with joy and fervent devotion to Mary. The parishioners of Cap de la Madeleine were faithfully carrying out their pastor's vow by consecrating the little Shrine to Our Lady of the Rosary.

Preceded by his great reputation for sanctity, Father Frederic was coming back to Canada at a providential time.

"He was the soul of that unforgettable day," declared Father Duguay. He gave a very remarkable sermon at the High Mass. The congregation was deeply moved because they could not fail to realize that the spirit of God was speaking through him. There came a moment when he had a presentiment of the great future of the new undertaking. He explained the vital importance of Father Desilets' plan, and then, like a prophet, foretold the glorious destiny of the Shrine. He exclaimed: "In the future it will be Mary's own Shrine. You parishioners of the Cape will come to pray here. People will come here from all parts of the diocese; they will come from all over the country. It will become too small to contain the crowds that will come to pray to Our Lady of the Rosary." ⁴

After Mass, the statue of Our Lady of the Rosary was solemnly moved from the side-chapel to the main altar. By this ceremony she took formal possession of the Shrine. During the afternoon, following Vespers, Father Frederic gave another sermon. The people spent the rest of the day in fervent and confident prayer. They asked the Blessed Virgin for a clear sign, some irrefutable evidence that she had accepted this Shrine which had been dedicated to her in perpetuity.

At about seven o'clock in the evening, a crippled man, Pierre Lacroix of Trois Rivières, was brought to the rectory. He had come to pray for a cure. Fathers Desilets and Frederic took him by the arms and went into the Shrine with him. At the altar rail the two priests knelt, while the sick man sat on a chair between them. They had been praying there for a few minutes when the statue became animated. Its eyes, which were always modestly lowered, were distinctly open in a very natural way, as though Mary was looking beyond the three praying men toward Trois Rivières.

Father Desilets, who was on the sick man's right, went over to Father Frederic.

"Do you see it?" he asked.

"Yes," the friar replied. "The statue's eyes are open, aren't they?"

"Why, yes. But is it really true?"

Then Pierre Lacroix told them that he too had been seeing it for the last few minutes.

When this man was dying, on January 14, 1895 — at a time when one does not lie — he testified under oath that the eyes of Mary's statue were animated. Father Frederic declared that his statement was correct in all its details. The friar himself wrote in his historical brochure on the Shrine, *Le sanctuaire du Très Saint Rosaire du Cap de la Magdeleine* (pp. 11ff):

The eyes of the Virgin's statue, which are completely lowered, were wide open; she was looking fixedly straight ahead. An illusion was difficult; her face was brightly illumined by the sunlight shining through a window and lighting up the whole Shrine. Her eyes were dark, well-formed, and quite in harmony with her other features.

The Madonna's look was that of a living person; its expression was one of severity mingled with sadness. This marvel lasted approximately five to ten minutes.

Vicar General des Ilets (who remained pastor of the Cape until his death) never had a moment's doubt concerning the reality of the marvel, and he frequently spoke about it before he died.

As to the Reverend Father Frederic, he continues to declare that he too has never had any doubt, and that the impression made on him by the prolonged look of the Blessed Virgin has remained so profound that he still sees it clearly before his eyes, and that if he could draw, he would make a picture of her as she appeared to him on June 22, 1888.

The simultaneous observation of three witnesses, at the very time of a marvel that lasted so long, would seem to be of great weight in favor of the authenticity of that marvel.

Father Frederic wrote that statement in 1897. Therefore nine years after the marvel of the opening of the eyes of Mary's

statue, he still had a clear visual image of the lengthy gaze of Our Lady!

He discerned in this manifestation of the Queen of Heaven a desire to look down with kindness upon those who came to pray with confidence to her in her Shrine.

As for himself, there is no doubt that Mary's long gaze, which remained ever present in his memory, gave him strong encouragement in founding and organizing the Shrine, especially in the difficulties and contradictions that arose in the beginning.

The Soul of the Pilgrimages

Thus great events had manifested the presence of the Blessed Virgin at Cap de la Madeleine in a striking way: the bridge of the rosaries and the marvel of the opening of the statue's eyes. By these two signs, Mary had accepted sovereignty over the fief which her devoted servants had prepared for her.

The first of those events had drawn, between 1879 and 1888, several private and several public pilgrimages. The first public pilgrimage took place on May 7, 1883, during the same year when Pope Leo XIII's first encyclical on the rosary was issued: 150 persons came on foot from Trois Rivières, including the director, nuns, and orphans of the Providence Hospital, with others, under the leadership of Canon Severin Rhéault, the pastor of the Cathedral. They received communion in the Rosary chapel, their intention being that Bishop Laflèche might have a successful journey to Rome.

On June 24, 1888, two days after the dedication of the Shrine to the Queen of the Rosary, nearly 1500 pilgrims went to the Cape from Trois-Rivières, Bécancour, and Ste. Angèle.

At the end of 1888, statistics showed that more than 10,000 persons had come from many places to greet Our Lady of the Cape.

The first article throwing the spotlight of publicity on the Shrine appeared in the *Journal des Trois Rivières* on July 19, 1888. In it "a pilgrim who was grateful to the Rosary Virgin" wrote a general justification of pilgrimage shrines and especially of "the little church of Cap de la Madeleine," which, he reported, is beginning to attract crowds. "I am not a prophet or the son of a prophet," he concluded, "but from my observations I believe that I am not mistaken in predicting that the old shrine of Cap de la Madeleine will perhaps in the fairly close future equal in interest the famous shrines of St. Ann." This pilgrim certainly had the insight of a prophet.

Three men served as instruments of Providence in this work: the true founder of the Shrine of Our Lady of the Cape was Vicar General Luc Desilets, and the two co-founders were the zealous Father Louis Eugène Duguay and the humble and enterprising Father Frederic.

Father Desilets knew how to judge people. He insisted so much on Father Frederic's collaborating in his Marian project because he found in him the reputation of a saint and the prestige of a Holy Land missionary who was accustomed to receiving pilgrims and was better qualified than anyone else to explain the Mysteries of the Rosary.

At Father Frederic's Golden Jubilee as a religious, in 1915, Father Duguay disclosed the ideas of Father Desilets when he said:

When my pastor, Msgr. des Islets, felt that he was dying, he revealed to me in a very intimate conversation (the last that I had with him) the whole future of the Shrine, and he asked me to settle the parish accounts and to continue his work. I had always feared that responsibility. He discerned an evasive attitude in my reply. Then, looking straight at me, he said:

"This is the work of the Blessed Virgin. If you neglect it, she will reject you and will choose another to work for her. Besides, Father Frederic will help you: for it is not without a special intention of Divine Providence that he came here."

Those words throw light on this sentence which the friar wrote to his Provincial on September 24, 1889: "The desire of

the deceased (Father Desilets) was to work with me for the development of the Shrine."

The Vicar General had a clear view of the Shrine's future evolution. For that purpose he invested substantial amounts of money in construction, purchases of ground, and necessary improvements, so that his sudden death left the parish in serious financial difficulties.

For some time it was thought that the project was merely the idea of one man and that it would fail with the death of the founder. But the Blessed Virgin had shown quite clearly what she wanted. She therefore chose two men of God to continue the work.

Father Duguay, the vicar, who had been Father Desilets' disciple for ten years, became his successor, and like a new Eliseus inherited the mantle of his zeal and virtues. In assuming responsibilities that seemed to be insuperable, he relied on Our Lady to find a solution and to bring to a good conclusion an undertaking that had been begun for her cult and her glory. He was not disappointed.

Without anyone having made the suggestion, Bishop Laflèche, as we know, asked Father Frederic to stay at the Cape and to help the new pastor to solve the parish's financial problem, to receive the pilgrims, and, in a word, to advance the plans that had already been undertaken.

Father Frederic used to say that he was timid, yet he was extraordinarily enterprising. His strong and generous nature, which was rich in all sorts of ingenuity, impelled him to give himself without any other concern except to lead souls back to God. This habit of devoting himself utterly to the apostolate had become natural to him. The lamp that lighted his path was the sun of God's will and not the torch of meditation of purely personal plans. No obstacle could stop him once he had said: "God wants this work! The Blessed Virgin insists on it!" Patiently he would wait for the right time, with all the tenacity of a good Fleming and the perseverance of a saint.

Moreover he had that necessary degree of enthusiasm without which nothing great or difficult can ever be accomplished. In addition to the natural and supernatural qualities, he had a sublime devotion to Our Lady. Whenever he spoke of her, his voice quavered with emotion and tears moistened his eyes.

The development of the Shrine was to take on new life from the efforts of Father Duguay and Father Frederic.

A few days after his appointment, the new pastor of Cap de la Madeleine sent an open letter to the *Journal des Trois Rivières* announcing his firm intention of increasing devotion to the Rosary by all possible means. After recalling the edifying pilgrimages of the preceding years and the graces obtained through Mary's intercession, he paid a final tribute of gratitude to Father Luc Desilets, who had given the last twenty years of his life to making the little Shrine beautiful and to glorifying the Mother of God. He requested the pastors and superiors of religious communities who wished to make a pilgrimage to Our Lady of the Rosary to notify him several days in advance "in order that everything can be done in an orderly and calm way." Then he added:

We enjoy the advantage of having here at the Cape the Rev. Father Frederic, Commissary of the Holy Land for the entire Dominion. Our pilgrims will therefore have the great privilege of having a Father from the Holy Land who is glad to be at their disposition, either to hear their confessions or to give them talks explaining the Mysteries of the Rosary, taking them in spirit to the Holy Places where those very Mysteries occurred.

He lived at those Holy Places for many years. Until the construction of his modest residence is completed (and it is already begun), the Reverend Father has consented to keep a room here with us at the Cape and to reside here during the month of the Most Holy Rosary.

For the next fourteen years there was to be between Fathers Duguay and Frederic a brotherly union of zeal and prayer, of trials and consolations, of humiliations and glories. The former later declared to Father Mathieu Marie Daunais,

O.F.M.: "For fourteen years, with Father Frederic, I worked in the supernatural."

He made this other disclosure at a great anniversary: "Here is the secret of that union which made the Father's work my work, his watching at night my watching, his labors my labors, his life my life. He was there from the beginning, *in principio erat*; and by analogy I can say that everything was done by him, since nothing was done without him; [he was] always my helper, my support, my adviser, my mentor, my model." ⁵

Father Frederic's presence during the first stages of the undertaking may be considered a true actual grace obtained by the intercession of the miraculous Madonna. As we have noted, by his preaching and writing he was her first prophet and the best publicizer of her Shrine. The prestige of his holiness, what we might call his *magnetism*, was in large part responsible for drawing the first crowds to the feet of the Queen of the Rosary. At a time when Cap de la Madeleine still offered so few attractions to visitors, nothing less than the dynamic personality of a saint was needed to start a popular trend. As Bishop Cloutier of Trois Rivières declared at the funeral of the Servant of God: "It was Father Frederic who, to a great extent, launched the work of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary at Cap de la Madeleine."

In the beginning this project seemed rash, even in the eyes of some members of the clergy. It must be said that in 1888 the Cape was a very little-known place. It was merely a very unattractive village which was rather difficult to reach, as for that matter were many other Marian Shrines at first, such as Lourdes, La Salette, Fatima, and Tepeyac (Mexico). It would seem that Our Lady requires prayer and penance of her children who wish to come to her at those places where she dispenses mercy. Later developments invariably demonstrate the good taste of the Queen of the universe: she knows how to select picturesque sites for her centers of action.

In 1888 one could not take a train or a steamer to the Cape. Automobiles and buses did not yet exist. The national highway along the St. Lawrence River between Montreal and Quebec was not hard-surfaced. The only way to reach the Cape was by carriage or on foot, walking in the shifting sand; in some places wheels sank in up to the axles. It was only a year since boats could dock at the deep-water pier which had been built by Senator Hippolyte Montplaisir, at Father Desilets' urging.

Some sceptics went to the Cape to make a little investigation and reported on returning: "Nothing can be accomplished on that sandy knoll!"

Such people did not think that Father Frederic was capable of directing the organization of pilgrimages which he had undertaken. They did not believe in his words: "The Blessed Virgin wishes to be honored here at the Cape!"

They spread this joke: "Father Frederic is bringing people to the Cape so that they can venerate him there!"

We wonder whether the friar was acquainted with this consoling statement which an Archbishop of Cambrai once made to Father Dehaene, the former principal of the high school in Hazebrouck: "Persecution, my dear friend, prevents us from growing mouldy."

One day Bishop Laflèche answered the overzealous critics: "There is nothing wrong with Father Frederic leading people to Cap de la Madeleine to have them recite the rosary there. If things change, I will look into it."

Despite certain real handicaps in the location, despite contradictions coming from human beings, Father Frederic nevertheless continued his way of life; he always worked for the glory of God. For he was convinced that he was carrying out a project of Our Lady.

To those who objected, "Why pray to the Blessed Virgin in one place more than another?", he wisely replied with St.

Augustine that the Lord is master of His gifts: once God indicates a place where He is pleased to manifest His presence and dispense His favors, men can only revere His wisdom in respectful silence, and above all show themselves eager to go and receive His valuable gifts where He deigns to grant them.

"Why go to the Cape? Why go and pray to the Blessed Virgin at Cap de la Madeleine rather than elsewhere?" But the entire history of that powerhouse of prayer proclaims the very special presence of Mary and a very special choice on the part of Heaven. The favors obtained from Our Lady of the Rosary attracted pilgrims, and after 1892, the Shrine's monthly magazine, *Les Annales du Très Saint Rosaire*, began to publish these favors.⁶

Those pilgrims who took a sceptical attitude believed that this growing religious movement was taking place without ecclesiastical authorization and to the detriment of other undertakings. This was not the case. Bishop Laflèche was alertly following even the least details of all that occurred at the Cape. He both supervised and encouraged all that was done. He liked to make occasional visits to greet the pilgrims and to edify them by one of his very simple, powerful, and uplifting sermons. However, he maintained a prudent reserve, leaving to God the care of manifesting the providential and supernatural character of this undertaking.

Fathers Duguay and Frederic submitted all their plans to the chancery. Thus they obtained approbations for the project and the organization of pilgrimages and for the successive stages of the work as it developed.

As Our Lady's Herald, Father Frederic understood that in order to inspire a widespread movement of pilgrims, he himself had to go into the parishes of the dioceses of Trois Rivières, Nicolet, Quebec and Montreal, and invite them to the Shrine and organize their pilgrimages. He was the first organizer of pilgrimages to the Cape on a large scale. He gave the people intensely interesting talks on the Mysteries of

the Rosary. He spoke of the remarkable favors obtained through Our Lady of the Cape, and he advised families to be represented at the Madonna's feet by one or two of their members who would pray for all and on behalf of all. Thus he drew them after him to the Shrine.

He continued to make frequent visits to the fraternities of the Third Order. He had already founded several and had preached to the most important ones in existence at that time. It was quite natural that he turned to them to make the Cape better known. Thus it is easily understandable that the fraternities of the Third Order in the cities of Montreal and Quebec were among the first extra-diocesan societies (except perhaps for those of Nicolet, the diocese closest to Trois Rivières) to accept the friar's earnest invitations. At least during the first ten years, the only groups of pilgrims that came from Quebec City were organized by the tertiaries of Saint Roch and Saint Sauveur.

An article appearing in *La Revue du Tiers Ordre et de la Terre Sainte* in 1893 (pp. 462 ff.) reveals the effectiveness of a propaganda campaign which Father Frederic conducted with enthusiasm over only a few days:

A magnificent pilgrimage was made on August 12 [Feast of St. Clare] by our brothers and sisters [of the Third Order] of Quebec [in the large religious habit] to the Shrine of Cap de la Madeleine and to Trois Rivières, where the remains of our beloved Brother Didace rest....

The steamers *Pèlerin* and *Sainte Croix*, which were to transport the 1200 pilgrims, left the pier at six o'clock [p.m.]. The director, the Rev. Perron, [O.M.I.], was obliged to refuse more than 400 persons who also desired to go to Cap de la Madeleine.

This great attendance was due to the zeal of the director and to a visit of the Rev. Father Frederic, the Shrine's guardian, who came to Quebec last Friday and strongly urged the faithful to take part in this pious pilgrimage, assuring them that they would thus fulfill the wishes of the Holy Father, who has just recommended to the Christian world both the Third Order of St. Francis and the devotion to Our Lady of the Holy Rosary.

Frequently, as on August 12, 1893, Father Frederic accompanied the pilgrims from Montreal or Quebec on the boat or train. At such times the pilgrims on the steamer spent the whole enchanted night in prayers which were directed by Our Lady's tireless apostle.

At the request of the pastors, these pilgrimages were often preluded by a major retreat or a triduum of sermons, confessions, and communions. After their souls had thus been prepared, the pilgrims remained recollected while traveling to the Rosary Shrine.

When they arrived, Father Frederic was on the station platform or the pier to welcome them, always holding his rosary in his hand. While walking to the Shrine, he led the recitation of the beads aloud. Priests or pilgrims dispersed along the way also recited the rosary, forming groups which made the village and river bank re-echo with many prayers, like powerful organized choirs. This public demonstration stirred everyone who witnessed it, like a pure and harmonious song, and was in itself an effective sermon.

The pilgrims' Mass and Communion took place at the Shrine. Father Frederic would give a talk afterward and then hear confessions, bless the sick, encourage or console individual pilgrims, and have the group venerate the relics from the Holy Land. In the pulpit he commented on the Mysteries of the Rosary, and recited the prayers aloud with inimitable unction and solemnity. He inspired fervor in everyone. At these times he accomplished what he had written to the Very Rev. Father Raphael Delarbre, O.F.M., on December 18, 1890:

The Blessed Virgin does not yet have a Shrine in Canada. I have an irresistible desire that she should have one here. With the blessing of the Most Reverend Father [General] and, if need be, with that of His Holiness Leo XIII, I will be sure of success. The Blessed Virgin is not loved in a sufficiently practical way; the Rosary, which the Holy Father recommends so much, is not known! I always preach the fifteen Mysteries. I take my listeners with me to the Holy Land.

It was especially during the consecration of the pilgrims to Mary as Queen of the Most Holy Rosary that Father Frederic excelled. In that ceremony, which took place shortly before the pilgrims' departure, he gave himself utterly in the words and prayers which he said. He had that true form of eloquence which communicates its message, which touches hearts and makes them better. Several years after their pilgrimage, people would still remember with emotion that ceremony which had moved them so deeply, like the good man who expressed his personal impression of Father Frederic in a characteristic gesture and remark into which he put his whole soul: "I thought the Blessed Virgin was going to speak to him!"

In his instructive and stirring sermons this apostle of Our Lady knew how to speak in a way that was interesting to pilgrims of all classes. Some secret magnetic power seemed to issue from his words. He could give brief talks, but usually he spoke at length, forgetting like St. Bernardine of Siena the advice which the Seraphic St. Francis gave to his preachers to speak about "vices and virtues, punishment and glory *with few words*, because the Lord gave short sermons on earth."

He was able to fascinate little children. A newspaperman of Trois Rivières in 1888 reported that he had "witnessed an utterly charming scene" during the Feast of the Rosary at Cap de la Madeleine:

On entering the Rosary Chapel, I perceived a group of children standing around the Crib of the Infant Jesus of Bethlehem, and among them the Rev. Father Frederic, with a fatherly smile lighting up his features, was talking to them in an informal way about the events connected with the Birth of the Savior, asking questions of one after another, giving them advice which they could understand, and talking with them in their own language and edifying them while also charming them. And on all those innocent little faces could be seen the keenest interest in every word which the holy Friar uttered. This scene certainly recalled that of Our Lord among the children. Fortunate is the generation whose early years will remain enlightened by such memories! ⁷

Whenever the glory of God or the salvation of souls was involved, Father Frederic forgot himself completely in order to preach, no matter how exhausted he was. One day he returned from a mission seriously ill. For six days, intense pains kept him in bed. He could not retain any food; in fact his stomach could not even tolerate water. Then he was told that the parishioners of Champlain (in the Diocese of Trois Rivières) had just arrived at the Shrine. Making a great effort, he arose, went to the Rosary Chapel, stepped into the pulpit, prayed and spoke, and presided over all the ceremonies, moving the whole congregation to tears. This time his self-forgetfulness in the heroic choice brought an unexpected joy to the rectory at the Cape: after the pilgrims left, Father Frederic resumed his usual duties without showing any further sign of fatigue or illness. He was cured.⁸

By his devotion, his mortified way of life, and his fervent preaching, Father Frederic created the spiritual atmosphere of prayer and penance that characterized the pilgrimages to the Cape.

After the Way of the Cross was erected in 1896 along the bank of the St. Lawrence River, no pilgrimage was made without that devotion, which supplied the penitential tone. In this work, which he had founded, Father Frederic was wholly in his element. The former Vicar Custodial of the Holy Land loved to preach the Sorrowful Way of the Cross. Besides, he could do so better than anyone.

His presence at the Shrine also created an atmosphere of supernatural confidence. Many persons took advantage of their pilgrimage to meet him and ask for the help of his prayers. He was considered a saint, and like a number of holy friends of God he seemed to have received the gift of performing miracles and of reading consciences. He was also looked upon as the faithful living image of St. Francis of Assisi. It is certain that, after God and the Blessed Virgin, it was he who attracted the pilgrims. The latter placed in his care the pleas which they brought to Our Lady's feet. With

him as their advocate, their petition must be granted; without him, it might well fail.

As for himself, he made use of this confidence to inspire a greater devotion to Our Lady of the Rosary in the sick and the afflicted. "The Blessed Virgin is so good," he used to say, "she will come to your aid. She will cure you." With a fervent desire to be heard, he used to repeat this prayer of a saint: "Help me to bring closer to you those who come to me."

The people's confidence in the effectiveness of his prayers embarrassed the humble friar. He confided to his friend the Very Rev. Father Raphael Delarbre, O.F.M., in a letter: ⁹

I am working for the glory of Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary. I preside over all the pilgrimages at the Cape; some came yesterday from quite a distance: an entire country parish, more than six hundred communions; they left this morning; great fervor; it does a great deal of good. But our good people run the risk of spoiling everything: they come to ask for rain or good weather, and the Blessed Virgin grants their prayers; they also ask with great fervor for a cure for all their sick ones, and there they make a big mistake: instead of asking it of Mary, the Health of the Sick, they ask me for it, in person and out loud! It is frightening — what faith!

With that unshakable faith which Our Lady's herald gave them, the faithful obtained striking miracles from the Blessed Virgin. Thus after having asked Father Frederic for his help, Monsieur Charles Lamy of Saint Sévère (St. Maurice County, Diocese of Trois Rivières) was instantaneously cured at the Shrine of the Cape.

After a triduum which the friar had preached, this farmer decided to undertake the pilgrimage to Cap de la Madeleine with the members of his parish. He wanted to obtain a cure. A kicking horse had fractured his right arm. The arm improved, but a suppurating wound formed. The poor man had endured intense pain night and day for four weeks. Amputation of the arm had even been discussed. On the evening of his arrival at the Cape, he was suffering so much

that the pain made him perspire profusely. He said to the vicar who visited him in order to give him hope and encouragement: "Pray for me. My arm must be healed. I have real confidence in Father Frederic and in the Blessed Virgin."

The next morning he went to see the Friar, who touched his arm with his large mission crucifix and said to him:

"Go and recite the rosary before the Blessed Virgin's statue, and you will be healed."

While he was praying, he perspired a great deal, and absent-mindedly taking his handkerchief in the hand that had been sick, he wiped his face — and realized that his arm was healed! With beaming features, he immediately walked calmly to the rectory to show his arm. The bandages were removed and the wound appeared well healed. Later he reported: "The next day I loaded sixteen wagon-loads of hay without feeling the slightest pain."

If a pilgrim claimed to have obtained a cure through the intercession of Father Frederic's prayers, Our Lady's apostle always attributed it to the power of the relics from the Holy Land or to the motherly kindness of Our Lady of Calvary or Our Lady of the Cape.

Some persons — usually some religious — joked about the miracles that were attributed to the Friar and laughed at his way of life. But the crowds venerated him.

His influence was so great that people wondered whether the pilgrimages would continue once he should disappear. For he was truly the *soul of the pilgrimages to Cap de la Madeleine*, as his companion in arms, Father Duguay, declared: "At times, when the Father left the Cape for other missions, and religious, Dominicans, Oblates, Franciscans, priests from the diocesan seminary and others came to lend their assistance, he nevertheless remained the soul of the pilgrimages, controlling them as to the material and spiritual aspects."¹⁰

The presence of the Friar at the Cape during his fourteen years of ministry (1888-1902) was connected with a multitude

of different events. Some of the great religious celebrations that attracted crowds which were large for those times should be mentioned: at the beginning of July, 1894, the two hundredth anniversary of the Confraternity of the Rosary; on September 10, 1895, a congress of the Franciscan Third Order (undoubtedly the first of its kind in Canada) which was attended by 8,000 pilgrims; on June 30, 1896, the solemn blessing of the new open-air Way of the Cross by Bishop Laflèche before 5,000 persons; on May 31, 1897, the solemn inauguration and blessing by Bishop Laflèche of the new railway branch line in the presence of over 5,000 pilgrims; and on September 6, 1900, the solemn blessing of the new monuments of the Way of the Cross by Bishop Cloutier (6,000 to 8,000 pilgrims).

Such was the apostolate of Father Frederic at the Shrine itself. But it also spread far and wide by his writings.

With the aim of promoting the ever growing flow of pilgrimages and of intensifying the devotion to Our Lady among the Canadian people, in January, 1892, in collaboration with Father Duguay he founded a monthly periodical entitled *Les Annales du Très Saint Rosaire*. This magazine regularly included four principal sections: the life and glories of Mary in Holy Scripture and Tradition; descriptions of the Shrines of the Holy Land and of the Blessed Virgin; historical articles on relics of Our Lady or the Holy Land; and reports of favors received at Cap de la Madeleine. It was a very simple program: the Mother of God, in herself, her Shrines, her relics, and her miracles. Father Frederic contributed the first three parts in order to write about his beloved Palestine. For ten years he alone edited most of the issues of this "monthly magazine, published in collaboration," as its subtitle described it. "My name will not appear," he confided to a friend. The administrative responsibility was Father Duguay's; officially it was to be "his undertaking exclusively." The magazine's appearance, with its twenty-four small pages on heavy yellow paper, without a cover, indicated that the strictest economy

had been practised so as to reduce the price of a subscription to twenty-five cents. "All its beauty is inside," people said with a smile. However, it soon became popular, thanks to the influence of Father Frederic who was its most effective propagator. Within a year it acquired twelve thousand subscribers.

The Friar's human efforts for the Shrine re-inforced the supernatural attraction of the Queen of the Rosary, and the results surpassed all expectations. They were such that in 1895 the statistics showed a total of thirty thousand pilgrims, and in 1900 Bishop Cloutier officially proclaimed Cap de la Madeleine a *diocesan* shrine. In his official letter on the Rosary of Mary (April 20, 1900), the Bishop of Trois Rivières declared: "Every year 30,000 to 40,000 pilgrims visit the modest Chapel at the Cape and go home laden with spiritual and temporal graces, as well as covered by the protection of the Immaculate Virgin." In 1909 the culminating point was reached when the Fathers of the first Plenary Council of Quebec recognized the Shrine of Our Lady of the Rosary as a *national* center of pilgrimages.

Beginning in 1888, the work increased year by year. By 1893 Father Duguay was overworked. His assistant, Father Frederic, wrote to Bishop Laflèche on August 27, 1893: "In the opinion of everyone, a religious order henceforth seems necessary to maintain and develop the undertaking which has already been begun at Cap de la Madeleine. The Franciscan Order cannot under any circumstances accept this mission because of the *handling of money* which is absolutely forbidden by the Rule." At that time the Franciscan superiors insisted on observing that point of the Rule very strictly, without any dispensation. Father Frederic had submitted the matter to them, and following their definitive decision, he had suspended negotiations. In another letter to the Bishop of Trois Rivières, written four days after the preceding one (August 31, 1893), he again referred to the future of the Shrine: "The work of the pilgrimages at the Cap, which is

now too much for *one man alone* (i.e. the pastor), seems to require the presence of a religious order, such as, for instance, the Congregation of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate." These missionaries, who were greatly admired in Canada, were at that time in France the guardians of the famous basilicas of Pontmain and Notre Dame de la Garde.

In that same year, 1893, Bishop Laflèche offered the Shrine at the Cape to the Oblates,¹¹ and then, in 1896, to the Dominicans.¹² Father Duguay served as intermediary with other orders that also asked for a delay as they were not ready to undertake that foundation.

Father Frederic showed an admirable selflessness in all his work for the Cape. He consistently refused to accept possession of the Shrine for himself and for his order, despite several offers by the Bishops of Trois Rivières. Bishop Cloutier even announced in his pastoral letter of April, 1900, that the Franciscan Fathers of the Holy Land Commissariat had, "until further notice and in agreement with the pastor of the parish, the responsibility and service of the Shrine dedicated to Our Lady of the Holy Rosary, as well as of the pilgrimages," of which Father Frederic became the director. And as a matter of fact, during the summer season of 1900 and 1901, the pilgrimages were presided over by the Franciscan Fathers of Montreal, Quebec and Trois Rivières. But this assignment was only temporary.

Father Frederic had developed the pilgrimages for Our Lady and for the benefit of the religious order which it might please God to call to complete the undertaking. "As to the future of the Cape," he wrote to Bishop Cloutier on June 20, 1901, "our intimate conviction remains that a religious order is needed there to direct both the pilgrimages and the parish. With that, and the *electric tramways*, the Cape's future is assured!"

He again suggested the Oblate Fathers when in 1901 Bishop F. X. Cloutier, who had followed Bishop Laflèche in the episcopacy of Trois Rivières, wanted to make a definitive

reorganization of the Shrine of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary. One day he described the scene: "I wondered which religious I should summon for that purpose, as it was agreed that only a religious order could effectively serve such a shrine. I then consulted Father Frederic who, after a few moments' reflection, answered:

" 'Take the Oblates of Mary Immaculate.' "

" 'Why?' "

" 'Because,' he said, 'they are very humble and simple in manner.' " ¹³

On October 9, 1901, Bishop Cloutier submitted a formal offer to the Oblate Provincial, the Very Rev. J. M. Jodoin, who soon accepted it. It was Father Frederic who brought back to Father Duguay the news of the acceptance. Their joy was great. Both went to kneel and utter their thanks before the altar of Our Lady. From that day they foresaw the most brilliant future for the Rosary Shrine. The Oblates of Mary Immaculate took charge on May 7, 1902; they have directed it since then.

When his mission was fulfilled, Father Frederic, like St. John the Baptist before Jesus Christ, felt the need to efface himself completely in favor of the Blessed Virgin. "Leave me," he seemed to say to the crowds that thronged around him, "leave me and become attached to Mary. It is for her to increase and for me to decrease!" Having retired to his humble oratory in Trois Rivières, he made only brief visits to Our Lady of the Cape, as if to renew his complete devotion to her and to express more intimately to her his intense and warm affection. ³⁴

He still sent, and occasionally accompanied, numerous groups of fervent pilgrims who came from all parts of the Province of Quebec.

In brief, exactly what was Father Frederic's share in the development of the pilgrimages to the Shrine at Cap de la Madeleine? What remains today of his labor? He is the co-founder of the Shrine. He is, in the fullest sense of the word,

the "prophet" of Our Lady of the Cape: the foreteller, the seer, the herald. He is one of the three witnesses of the "marvel of the eyes": the Blessed Virgin's long gaze over him on the evening of June 22, 1888, sustained him throughout his fourteen-year apostolate for her. As the prophet of Our Lady of the Cape, he strongly advised Pastors Desilets and Duguay to acquire without delay the grounds surrounding the old church. After Father Desilets' death, he helped the new pastor for four or five years to solve the parish's financial problem. In writing his booklet, *Le sanctuaire du Très Saint Rosaire du Cap de la Magdeleine*, he became the first historian of the present Shrine. He was the first important organizer of pilgrimages; the fame of his sanctity brought thousands of the faithful to Mary's feet. During his long stay at the Cape, he became the soul of the pilgrimages. Besides serving at the Shrine as director and preacher, he also demonstrated his talent in the field of publicity by founding the *Annales du Très Saint Rosaire*; this monthly magazine was continued by the Oblate Fathers in 1902, and since 1916 it bears the title *Annales de Notre Dame du Cap*.¹⁵

The material development of the Shrine also engaged his attention. During Lent in 1891 he went to preach and collect funds among French Canadians in the United States in order to furnish the all-too-small Shrine with an annex — the first — that could contain three to four hundred pilgrims; it was replaced by a larger addition in 1904. He made many efforts to have the railway extended by a branch line from Trois Rivières to Cap de la Madeleine, and persuaded Senator Montplaisir to support the project.

He gave to the Cape what has been called "the penitential aspect of the Shrine," as evidenced in the Stations of the Way of the Cross. These wooden Stations were later replaced; only the Tomb of Our Lord, which was completely rebuilt in 1937, remains.

His initiative obtained the usual spiritual privileges that are available at shrines and that are the most important of all.

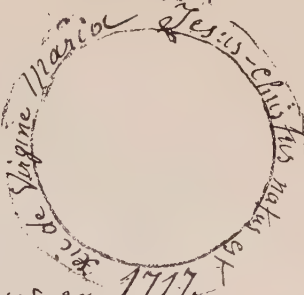
For this purpose he made the necessary requests to the Bishop of Trois Rivières and then to the Holy See, through the intervention of his colleague, the Very Rev. Raphael Delarbre, the Procurator General of the Franciscan Order in Rome. A brief of Leo XIII, dated December 19, 1892, granted a plenary indulgence to all pilgrims who, after confession and communion, visited the Rosary Chapel and prayed for the intentions of the Sovereign Pontiff. On December 15, 1893, a decree of the Sacred Congregation of Rites gave to all priest pilgrims the privilege of saying the proper votive Mass (*Gaudeamus*) of the Most Holy Rosary. This double spiritual favor is still in effect; it is regularly renewed at the request of the Guardians.

The miraculous statue of Our Lady of the Cape on the Shrine's main altar is crowned with a diadem studded with jewels, while on its chest is a large golden heart and through its hands runs a long rosary with large gilded beads that hangs from the baldachin in the form of the letter M. It is not widely known that this gold crown and heart are a gift from the English-speaking Tertiary ladies of Montreal, and that the rosary beads made out of wood from the olive trees in the Garden of Gethsemane are a gift of Father Frederic, who arranged to have them sent from the Holy Land. Lastly, Our Lady's servant provided the definitive Guardians of the Shrine by suggesting an Order consecrated to the Blessed Virgin, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

What remains today of Father Frederic's work at Cap de la Madeleine? The inspiration of his virtues, the example of his great love for Our Lady, and the fruitfulness of his apostolate. Above all, as Father Paul Emile Breton, O.M.I., has stated, there remains "a devotion that has been firmly planted at the Cape and that can only increase and prosper."

This varied and fruitful activity has for all time linked Father Frederic's name to the history of the Shrine at Cap de la Madeleine. His finest claim to glory in Canada is that he was the *apostle of Our Lady of the Cape*. That title alone would suffice to guarantee his fame.

Diamètre total de l'Étoile 0.55 41
 Inscription sur
 le plateau d'origine
 Lampes.
 16 brûlent sous l'arche



Longueur du marche pied 2 m
 Hauteur de l'autel 1 m plus l'épaisseur de la table 0.04.
 Hauteur de l'abside au-dessus de la paroi d'autel 1.70.
 29 Lampes brûlent dans la nef de la grotte
 2 au-dessus de l'escalier en cornue spirit.
 1 à l'autel des trois rois
 5 au-dessus de la crèche
 total 53 lampes;

Dimensions de la crèche

35  longueur 1.15. largeur 0.70.
 la poutre devant à hauteur 0.23.
 au-dessus à l'intérieur le fond de la crèche d'un côté 0.12
 au fond de 700 et perpendiculaire, un tableau en fait
 le fond (un fait)
 par côté la poutre selon à 0.35 (1 m)
 autel des trois rois.

Longueur de la table d'autel 1.70.
 du fond de l'autel jusqu'à la crèche 1.70.
 2 de la plus basse marche jusqu'au fond 2 = 10.
 une grosse colonne fait l'angle du côté de l'autel
 de la Nativité, et divise en 2 l'escalier de trois marches
 par lequel on descend à l'autel du magin à gauche
 et la crèche à droite
 largeur de la grotte un peu inégale varié
 entre 3 et 4 m (long. d'après l'échelle 10 m 55).



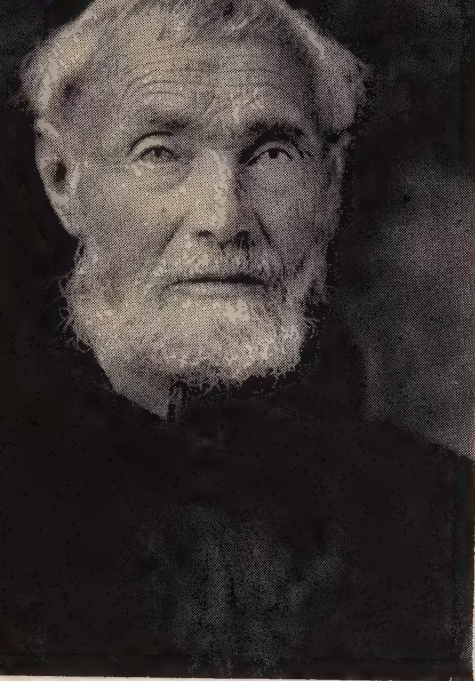


The Shrine of Our Lady of the Cape in Good Father Frederic's time: on the right the older rectory; in the center the Shrine of Our Lady of the Rosary; on the left the parish church of St. Mary Magdalen.

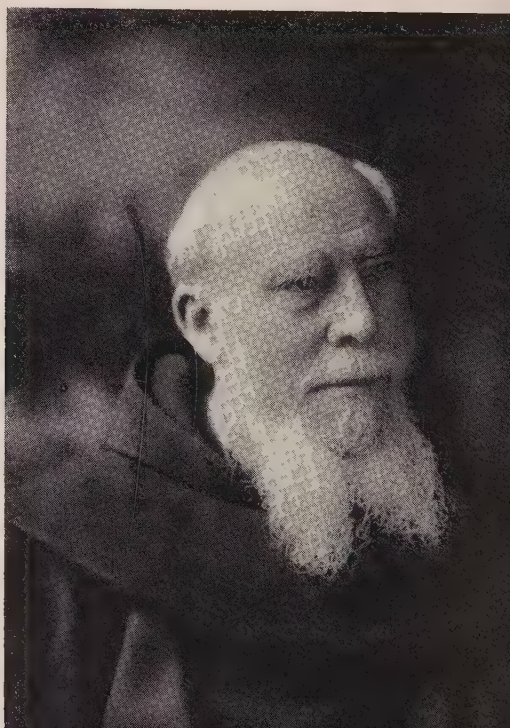


The Commissariat of the Holy Land in Trois-Rivières in 1889.

← Father Frederic explains to the Abbé Léon Provencher the astonishing longevity of the eight olive trees in the Garden of Gethsemani which witnessed the Agony of Jesus.



Good Father Frederic in 1913.



Father Augustin Bouynot, O.F.M.,
lifetime friend and companion of
Father Frederic.

In 1904, during the Jubilee of the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception and on the Octave of the Feast of the Rosary, the miraculous statue of the Blessed Virgin at the Cape obtained from Rome the remarkable privilege — which has so far been granted to no other statue in Canada — of being formally crowned. It was also the fiftieth anniversary of the placing of the beautiful statue on the main altar of the old Shrine.

This solemn coronation had had a humble prelude six years before: the crown had been set on the Madonna's head in an intimate first ceremony, as a token of filial devotion. Inspired by Father Frederic and directed by Father Ambroise Romain, O.F.M., some English-speaking Tertiary ladies of Montreal had generously sacrificed their jewels and promised not to replace them. Their pearls and diamonds and gold were transmuted into a royal crown and heart. On August 15, 1898, the Feast of Mary's Crowning in Heaven, one hundred and fifty Tertiary ladies brought the crown from Montreal and placed it before the main altar as a symbol of their gratitude for the favors which they had obtained during their pilgrimage in 1897. After a special ceremony, during which Father Ambroise gave a sermon, the crown was placed on the Madonna's head and the golden heart was suspended from her neck.

The celebration of the official crowning, in the name of Pope Pius X, was magnificent; it made an indelible impression on everyone who participated. A solemn triduum served as a preparation for the great day. October 12, 1904, can rightly be considered the most glorious day which the Queen of the Holy Rosary had ever known in Canada. The weather was ideal, without a cloud in the sky, and with a bright sun shining. Sixteen bishops and archbishops including His Excellency Msgr. Sbarretti, the Apostolic Delegate to Canada, over four hundred priests and religious, and no less than fifteen thousand persons from all parts of Canada and even from the United States were present on that day.

It was also the most glorious day in Father Frederic's life. After his many years of labor, he received due honor as prophet of Our Lady of the Cape.

At ten-thirty in the morning, while the church bells rang and a cannon was fired, the bishops left the Oblate monastery in a procession and went to a stand that had been erected in front of the old Shrine. First came a cross, then the choir boys of the Trois Rivières high school, dressed in their finest clothes, followed by priests in surplices, and numerous canons. Then came Father Frederic, bearing Our Lady's crown on a cushion, and finally the bishops wearing their pontifical robes.

The crown was the one which the English-speaking Tertiaries had donated in 1898.

An eye-witness recalled Father Frederic's attitude: "He seemed as simple and poor as he usually was, with the same devotion and the same recollection, except that in such circumstances he appeared slightly bewildered." A pastor who was one of his intimate friends happened to be close to the friar during the day and learned the cause of this "bewilderment" when Father Frederic said to him softly: "I am quite embarrassed at being chosen to carry the crown." But soon his features were suffused with bliss and his eyes sparkled with happiness. It was the joy of a son presenting a crown to his beloved Mother.

The Mass was celebrated by the Apostolic Delegate; Archbishop Bégin of Quebec gave the formal sermon in French. At the end of the Mass, Bishop Cloutier read a very succinct and interesting summary of the Shrine's history, which was obviously based on Father Frederic's historical sketch. The Bishop of Trois Rivières could not fail to mention the role which the Commissary of the Holy Land had played at the Cape. He paid tribute to the friar's merit and to that of Fathers Desilets and Duguay, saying:

It was the Reverend Father Frederic of Ghyvelde, O.F.M., Commissary of the Holy Land in Canada, who was the emissary

of Providence. The good Father generously gave his cooperation and assistance to the pastor of the parish in the care of the Confraternity of the Rosary, the ministry at the Shrine, and the reception of the pilgrimages. Due to the influence over the people which his well-known virtue gave him, and due to what we might call his magnetism, he made a considerable contribution to solving the problems and to spreading devotion to the Most Holy Rosary.

The Bishop ended his talk with these words: "Let us give thanks to Mary who, after having made her modest chapel a private Shrine, then a diocesan one, has deigned on this festival day to have it recognized as a national Shrine!"

Then the ceremony of the crowning by the Bishop of Trois Rivières, acting in the name of Pope Pius X, took place. Father Frederic presented the golden crown to the Bishop, who blessed it, and while a canon was fired and the bells were ringing a full peal, the prelate placed the symbol of royalty on the brow of Our Lady of the Cape. An inexpressible thrill of emotion ran through the crowd. It was a magnetic current that touched, stirred, and gripped the people's minds and hearts.

In that moment the whole country was kneeling before Our Lady of the Cape, the Sovereign of the St. Lawrence Valley, the protecting Queen of Canada.

On the evening of that exciting day, Father Frederic said: "Now I can sing my *Nunc dimittis* — 'Now Thou dost dismiss Thy servant in peace, O Lord' (Luke 2: 29)."

The dream which he had had, the prophecy which the great servant of Mary had uttered on the morning of the dedication of the Shrine on June 22, 1888, received its consecration, in the autumn of his life, on that glorious sun-filled day of October 12, 1904.

Chapter 16

THE APOSTLE OF THE THIRD ORDER

The Letter Tau or T was dear to St. Francis of Assisi because its form reminded him of the Cross. Four cross-like T's are found in the French words denoting four great loves of Father Frederic: *Terre Sainte* (Holy Land), *Très Saint Rosaire* (Most Holy Rosary), *Tiers Ordre franciscain* (Franciscan Third Order), and his adopted town *Trois Rivières* (Three Rivers). These four things which he loved so much cannot be better symbolized than by a cross potent, the Jerusalem or Holy Land cross, the central feature of which is precisely four T's joined at their base. In fact the Jerusalem cross is a cross potent between four crosslets.

As a young traveling salesman, Frederic loved the Third Order of St. Francis as soon as he discovered it when he resided in the boarding house in Estaires. It was the star which his soul perceived in the heaven of the spirit and which guided him to the First Order.

The first two books which he wrote at the beginning of his career dealt with the life of St. Francis of Assisi and with that of a Franciscan Tertiary, Blessed Jeanne Marie de Maillé.

In Bordeaux he was one of the first zealous collaborators of the *Revue franciscaine*. When he was superior, he gladly took charge of a fraternity of the Third Order, with the aim of spreading through society the spirit of St. Francis, the spirit of the Gospel.

In the Holy Land he promoted the Third Order among the pilgrims, and especially among priests, even though they came

from distant lands like his dear brother Pierre, who was a priest of the Paris Foreign Missions Society. It was Father Frederic's habit to receive these pilgrim tertiaries as novices or professed members of the Order of Penance "in the shadow of the Cross," on Calvary. On January 19, 1881, he asked the Father General of the Franciscan Order for faculties as Third Order directors for three missionaries in India and China whom he had received as tertiaries during the preceding year.

His first visit to Canada in 1881-82 had a threefold purpose: the possible creation of a Commissariat of the Holy Land, the establishment of the annual collection for the Holy Places, and lastly the development of the Third Order of St. Francis by visits to existing fraternities and by the founding of new ones. As we have seen, he fulfilled that mission with striking success. His stay in Canada brought about a rebirth of the Franciscan Third Order and a marvelous growth of the Archconfraternity of the Cord of St. Francis, which is a kind of training school for the Third Order.

In 1882 he published the first handbook of the Third Order in Canada: *La Règle du Troisième Ordre de saint François d'Assise* (653 pp.), of which five thousand copies were printed. It was almost word for word extracted from the sixth edition of *La Séraphique Règle* by the Very Rev. Léon de Clary (Paris, 1881).

Already during that first journey to Canada he had planned to publish with the Abbé Provancher a "little monthly magazine for the Third Order" — a plan which they had both conceived during their interview in Paris in June, 1881.¹ No doubt his numerous occupations and his sudden recall to the Near East prevented him from carrying out the project. We can indeed wonder whether Father Frederic, upon leaving Canada (May 1, 1882), did not pass the idea on to one of his friends, Rev. Prudent Cazeau, S.J., (1843-1884), who was the director of the fraternity in Montreal. The evidence of the friendship that existed between the Jesuit director of the Third Order and the Franciscan visitor of the fraternities is

found in their correspondence extending from October 15, 1881 to November 22, 1882, at least. Father Frederic made his visitation of the tertiaries in Montreal at the end of March, 1882. And in February, 1884, appeared the first issue of a magazine entitled *Petite revue du Tiers Ordre et des intérêts du Coeur de Jésus*, under the direction of Father Cazeau and the fraternity of which he had charge.²

After his definitive return to Canada in 1888, Father Frederic labored simultaneously for the extension of the Third Order, the work for the Holy Land, and the pilgrimages at Cap de la Madeleine. In 1889, he published in a popular edition of 10,000 copies a 72-page booklet entitled *Le Tiers Ordre. — Sa Règle, son excellence* (The Tird Order. — Its Rule, Its Excellence). It was a condensation of the most important material in the 600-page handbook, *Règle du Troisième Ordre de saint François*, which he had published in 1882, as we stated above. The new brochure was needed both for convenience and because of the changes which Pope Leo XIII had made in the Rule of the Third Order in 1883. Its price was exceedingly low: three cents a copy, or three dollars per hundred postpaid. This was just enough to cover the cost of printing and mailing. It was sold in units of one hundred copies. Thus the entire edition was distributed in a few months.³

Circumstances were favorable: following the example of Leo XIII, the Canadian bishops recommended the Third Order. Among them were Bishop Fabre of Montreal, the holy Bishop Moreau of Saint Hyacinthe who was a tertiary himself and who in a period of five years (1882 to 1886) wrote about the Third Order seven times in his pastoral letters, and above all the apostolic Bishop Laflèche of Trois Rivières.

In Quebec, Father Frederic obtained the support of the most powerful medium of propaganda: he reached the whole diocesan clergy. Cardinal Taschereau, who had been a tertiary for a long time, invited him to give an hour's talk on the excellence of the Third Order to the priests of his diocese.

The Archbishop had already urged, in a splendid pastoral letter, all the pastors to make the Third Order known among their parishioners and to establish fraternities in their parishes.

The talk took place during the priests' annual retreat, from one to two o'clock in the afternoon of August 29, 1889. The Cardinal was seated at the foot of the pulpit, while the retreatants occupied the pews. However, the speaker had to overcome some serious handicaps: an intense heat and a poorly selected time, which was more appropriate for digestion and a nap. Despite their good will, the pastors let their heads droop heavily. The older men did not conceal their weakness, while the younger priests struggled heroically against drowsiness. The preacher had prepared himself by fervent prayer. At this time when the minds of the audience were somnolent, good St. Francis evidently came to the help of his son. With a burst of eloquence which was typical and in which his gift of stirring hearts was always manifested, Father Frederic described the sacrifices which Christ and His servant Francis had made for souls. His forceful and fitting conclusion ensured his complete success: "It is not only for your personal salvation that you have been called to the priesthood. It is for the salvation of a great number of souls that are confided to you. Those souls cost Our Lord dearly, and you must not let them be lost. You will be held responsible for them by the Sovereign Judge of mankind. Now a good means to draw them away from vice and to lead them to virtue is the Third Order of Penance of St. Francis, which has been so strongly recommended by His Holiness Leo XIII, gloriously reigning. Placed as it is like an order between the cloister and the world, it is useful to priests and to the faithful. In the Third Order, rich men like King Louis of France have attained sanctity, and so have poor men like Novellon the shoemaker. In the Third Order, the Curé d'Ars, who was a tertiary himself, drew thousands of souls after him."

These inspired words suddenly opened his listeners' heavy eyelids and stirred their hearts. He recalled later: "I know not what a sudden surge of emotion gripped the whole audience when I spoke of the countless souls that had been saved by the Third Order. Our venerable priests awakened, and when I perceived tears shining in the eyes of those devoted pastors, I realized that heaven had granted my prayers, and I thanked God with the most intense gratitude."

At the end of the talk, Cardinal Taschereau spoke to the retreatants more or less in these words: "Now, gentlemen, those among you who are not yet Tertiaries and who may wish to take the habit of the Third Order are requested to go to the chapel, where Father will receive you into the Order immediately." Father Frederic adds: "The reception was without precedent in the annals of the Third Order. We gave the holy habit of the Order to ninety-two priests, nearly all of them pastors."⁴

Henceforth a large part of the clergy of the Archdiocese of Quebec was affiliated with the Franciscan Order. Consequently, the Third Order was destined to develop gradually in most of the parishes.

In order to organize his promotion work more effectively, in the winter of 1889 Father Frederic made a survey among the bishops of the Province of Quebec; he gathered the necessary statistics regarding the number of fraternities in existence, with their dates of canonical erection and the number of tertiaries. He planned to visit the Diocese of Rimouski first, but was prevented from doing so by various special circumstances and by his ever-increasing activities.

On July 1, 1889, Msgr. Cyrille Légaré, Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Quebec, replied to his inquiry concerning the Third Order: "His Eminence is absent on his pastoral visitation. He will return only on the 19th of this month. I know that His Eminence is collecting the statistics which you desire. On his return he will be happy to transmit them to you."⁵

On August 17, 1889, the Chancellor of the Archdiocese of Montreal sent in the list of the fraternities of the Third Order of St. Francis which had been established since January, 1884, with the date of the foundation of each. ⁶

Bishop Laflèche of Trois Rivières also gave his personal encouragement. Thus he delivered the formal sermon in the presence of eight thousand persons during an open-air Mass at a great Congress of the Third Order which was held at Cap de la Madeleine on September 10, 1895. This Congress, which was undoubtedly the first of its kind in Canada, had been prepared by Father Frederic. Tertiaries from the Dioceses of Montreal, Quebec, Trois Rivières, Nicolet and "other more distant dioceses" had answered his appeal. ⁷

It is evident that the bishops generously supported the missionary's overflowing zeal. Each of them wanted to follow the counsel of His Holiness Leo XIII by striving to spread the Third Order. The great Pope of the working class had repeated on several occasions: "My social reform is the Third Order."

Father Frederic had a profound conviction regarding the value of the Third Order of St. Francis. His conviction was based on sound reasons: obedience to the authority of the Holy See and of the Franciscan superiors, the sanctifying value of the Order of Penance, and love for St. Francis, who was presented to the faithful as a model because he was a perfect disciple of Christ.

Although he worked for other causes, Father Frederic never neglected the Third Order. He considered it an essential part of the mission which his highest superiors had confided to him. "You know that it is an important part of my mission to establish the Third Order," he wrote on February 6, 1898, to Father Duguay, and in 1882 to the Franciscan Provincial in France: "There is an immense amount of good to be done in this country [Canada] by means of the Third Order." And in 1901 he wrote to the guardian of the friary in Montreal with regard to propagating the *Revue du Tiers Ordre*: "Good reading must be spread, and our young Fathers seem to be firmly

convinced of one thing, i.e., that our special task is above all to spread the Third Order."

He faithfully carried out the instructions of Leo XIII by preaching about this school of lay saints whenever he could and by spreading this yeast in modern society. He wrote:

Every day we are asked what is the essence of the social action of the Third Order, and what is the meaning of Pope Leo XIII's saying that our dying society will once again be saved, as in the time of St. Francis, **by the Third Order**. It seems to us that the whole answer consists in this: if the tertiaries observe their holy Rule well, the world will again be saved.⁸

And he constantly gave talks explaining that Rule which is a code of Christian life and generosity.

Like all good preaching, his sermons were vivified by that double principle — both negative and positive — which is stated in Holy Scripture: *diverte a malo et fac bonum* (avoid evil and do good). He strove to lead the faithful away from the causes of moral decadence in Canada: the social scourge of luxury and "the ever-growing passion for dances, shows, and late hours — and they persuade themselves," he noted sorrowfully, "that it is harmless." He advocated the simple life. Wherein did he see the root of all good, the secret of the Third Order's social action? In holy Mass and Communion. He insisted on the frequent reception of the sacraments.

While he certainly did not neglect the conversion of sinners, he sought above all the spiritual progress of the good: "He who is just, let him be just still; and he who is holy, let him be hallowed still" (Apoc. 22:11). He inspired in souls a great love for virtue and a lofty idea of the value of the Third Order. His ideal was a well organized, trained, and active Christian elite. It was one of the characteristics of his apostolate to believe in the conquering power of good example; less fervent souls would be induced to imitate the good conduct of the more generous ones. Moreover his personal life in the service of God's glory was directed toward a social spiritual goal.

On October 16, 1889, he wrote to Father Provancher, who was organizing a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1890: "It will be impossible for me to think of accompanying a pilgrimage for a long time. I have an enormous amount of work to do as Commissary of the Holy Land and as visitator of the Third Order. The good God is blessing those two undertakings in an evident way. For the time being I want to devote to them all my strength and all my poor health. Just now I am suffering from inner pains. Though my digestion is bad, I am still active."

How did the faithful respond to Father Frederic's appeal? With magnificent enthusiasm, which is amazing to us today: they joined the Third Order by the hundreds. Some were attracted by the indulgences to be gained, others by the great number of tertiary saints, and most of them were undoubtedly drawn by the prestige of the Friar's holiness.

Thus during his second visit to Warwick in the Diocese of Nicolet in January, 1889, he gave the Third Order habit to one hundred and eighty-four men and women and received one hundred and twelve novices as professed members. In 1897 this little town had more than five hundred tertiaries.⁹

During the first months of 1889 Father Frederic admitted into the Third Order in a small country parish more than two hundred persons, and in another more than four hundred.¹⁰

He gave a glimpse of the fruits of his apostolate in a letter which he wrote on January 23, 1890, to Mother Mary of the Passion, the foundress of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary:

It would be difficult for me to enumerate the missions, triduum, and retreats which I have preached during the past year; once in four days I preached five or six at the same time, to the boys, the girls, the Brothers, the tertiaries.¹¹ In one mission in the mountains I received three hundred tertiaries. In another we gave the holy habit to seven hundred men and women postulants,¹² and the venerable pastor wrote to me a few weeks later: 'Our tertiaries are going right ahead. Their Rule means a great deal to them. Rather than break it, they would let their

heads be cut off!' I had a 72-page booklet on the Third Order printed. One thousand five hundred copies were distributed in just one small village! That is Canada!

The testimony of the "venerable pastor" shows that these receptions of large numbers of candidates by Father Frederic were not flashes in the pan. A surge of enthusiasm for the Franciscan life seems to have taken place at Saint Joseph de Lévis: in a major retreat which he preached from September 1 to 8, 1889, to twelve or fifteen hundred ladies, he gave the Third Order habit to six hundred persons, and the following year he professed the same number and moreover received between a hundred and a hundred and fifty novices.

He maintained high standards in admitting candidates. To have been judged worthy of entering the Third Order was considered a great honor. Thus at the turn of the century the upper middle-class in Trois Rivières felt that it was an honor to belong to the Third Order of St. Francis.

In the larger cities like Montreal, Trois Rivières, and Quebec, the tertiaries used to wear the large habit at their monthly meetings.

Even though at that time Father Frederic could not give the fraternities the high degree of organization which they have today, nevertheless he inculcated in them an unshakable attachment to their holy Rule and an evangelical and Franciscan spirituality whose effectiveness is not easy to transmit. He used to communicate the secret of that spirituality in the sermons which he gave at triduums, in an atmosphere of fervent devotion, with the presence of several confessors favoring numerous communions. A letter which he wrote on March 14, 1895, to Canon Thomas Martel, Pastor of Saint Barnabé in Saint Maurice County, outlines the program of those triduums:

I am happy to inform you that Father Héroux will come with me on Saturday. So as of Sunday there will be four of us to hear confessions; for I want all your good parishioners to receive

Communion twice, if you do not think it will be inconvenient: once as their Easter duty and another time to gain the indulgence of the triduum.

I will bring with me all that the tertiaries will need: manuals, beautiful scapulars with the image of St. Francis, and cords **which I made myself** [the former traveling salesman doing his advertising!]. Here is the schedule which I humbly suggest to you for your holy triduum: opening at the High Mass; every day, Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, Mass at nine o'clock, preceded by confessions since the Angelus and followed by the sermon. In the afternoon, at two o'clock, sermon, Benediction, and confessions until six o'clock. Wednesday at two o'clock, sermon, closing ceremony, taking of the habit, papal Blessing, Benediction. Thursday morning at eight I will celebrate a Solemn Mass for all the deceased of the parish, and I will strongly urge as many as can to receive Communion. If some of them were unable to come to receive the Third Order habit the previous day, I will receive them Thursday morning before I leave for the train.

At the National Congress of the Franciscan Third Order which was held in Montreal in 1921, the Reverend Paul Eugène Trudel, O.F.M., Provincial Commissary of the Third Order, described the work of the tireless missionary in these terms:

Thanks to the zeal of that ever valiant apostle, that friend of the people and of God, that inspirer of generous sacrifices for the good of souls, that preacher who was powerful in word and example, that model religious whose very edifying memory remains and will long remain in our hearts, thanks to the devotion of that great apostle of the Third Order, the late Father Frederic, when our Fathers definitively arrived in Canada in 1890, they could count thirty-four regularly organized Fraternities and a large number of isolated tertiaries who were ready to found new centers from which the ever beneficent spirit of St. Francis would radiate.¹⁴

How can we estimate the number of Canadian tertiaries when the Franciscans returned to Canada in 1890? If we may make a conjecture, in the absence of exact statistics, the various groups, even though some of them were not perfectly organized, must have included at least twelve thousand members. "Such a result and such a growth suffice to prove the

devotion of those who spontaneously launched this movement after 1840 and also to demonstrate how richly Providence and Francis of Assisi blessed and prospered their priestly work.”¹⁵

After the Franciscan restoration, Good Father Frederic was to increase still further the number of tertiaries, while ever aiming at high quality among them.

Today the Franciscan Third Order is in a more flourishing condition in Canada than in any other country in the world. Father Frederic played a large part in its extraordinary extension. In Trois-Rivières, which has been called the diocese with the highest proportion of tertiaries in the world, the Third Order of St. Francis still bears the stamp which the Servant of God impressed upon it.

In the years 1889, 1890 and 1891, he extended his apostolate for the Third Order beyond the Canadian border among the French Canadian people in New England.

In June, 1889, he went to preach retreats in the Diocese of Springfield: in Pittsfield, where he visited the small Third Order Fraternity, and at Indian Orchard and Three Rivers, where he received some isolated tertiaries.

He was once more in the United States from January to March, 1890. In Worcester he received some tertiaries, and he preached a major retreat to the women of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Fall River. The results of this retreat were impressive: of the two thousand ladies who received Communion, he received three to four hundred in the Third Order and the rest in the Archconfraternity of the Cord of St. Francis.

During another mission in the United States in February and March, 1891, he returned to Worcester and Fall River, and his visit created Franciscan centers in Holyoke, Champlain, Providence, and Arctic Center. “Those several retreats were the providential opportunity which led to the foundation of several fraternities in Canadian-American centers.”¹⁶

Chapter 17

THE PREACHER

Father Frederic was best known among the French Canadian people for his preaching.

It would be tedious to list the many places where he talked. It should suffice to note that he preached in most of the dioceses of the Province of Quebec, such as Quebec, Trois Rivières, Nicolet, Saint Hyacinthe, Montreal, Valleyfield, and Joliette.

He preached for Our Lady of the Cape, the Third Order of St. Francis, religious communities, parish retreats, Portiuncula Feasts, and pilgrimages to the great shrines of the Province of Quebec.

At certain times his talks were almost uninterrupted: links in an apparently endless golden chain.

We have already discussed his work for the Shrine at Cap de la Madeleine and the Franciscan Third Order. We will add a few words concerning the other causes for which our missionary labored zealously. We shall also describe the themes and characteristics of his sermons. And lastly we shall record several incidents which reveal the effectiveness of his preaching in relation to his virtues.

In a report which he wrote in Trois Rivières on May 25, 1889, he outlined to the Minister General the program which he usually followed in preaching parish retreats or in visiting Third Order fraternities:

The missions, which are called spiritual retreats here, are of two kinds: 1) the major mission which begins on a Sunday with a Solemn Mass and ends the following Sunday at Vespers; 2) the ordinary mission which also begins on Sunday and ends on the following Friday evening.

For the first as well as the second mission, the pastor invites his colleagues in neighboring parishes to help with confessions.

We get up at six o'clock, hear confessions until eight, then a Mass is celebrated, followed by a short sermon and a thanksgiving prayer. A last Mass is said at nine-thirty, followed by a 45-minute sermon. Afterward the priests return to the confessional if necessary.

At two in the afternoon, another talk; then Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament and confessions until six.

Even before St. Pius X issued his decree recommending frequent communion, Father Frederic encouraged these numerous communions during parish retreats, "having seen by experience," he said, "all the good that results."

Some persons still living remember with admiration the inspiring endurance records which the tireless preacher set during the Feasts of the Portiuncula or at certain Shrines.

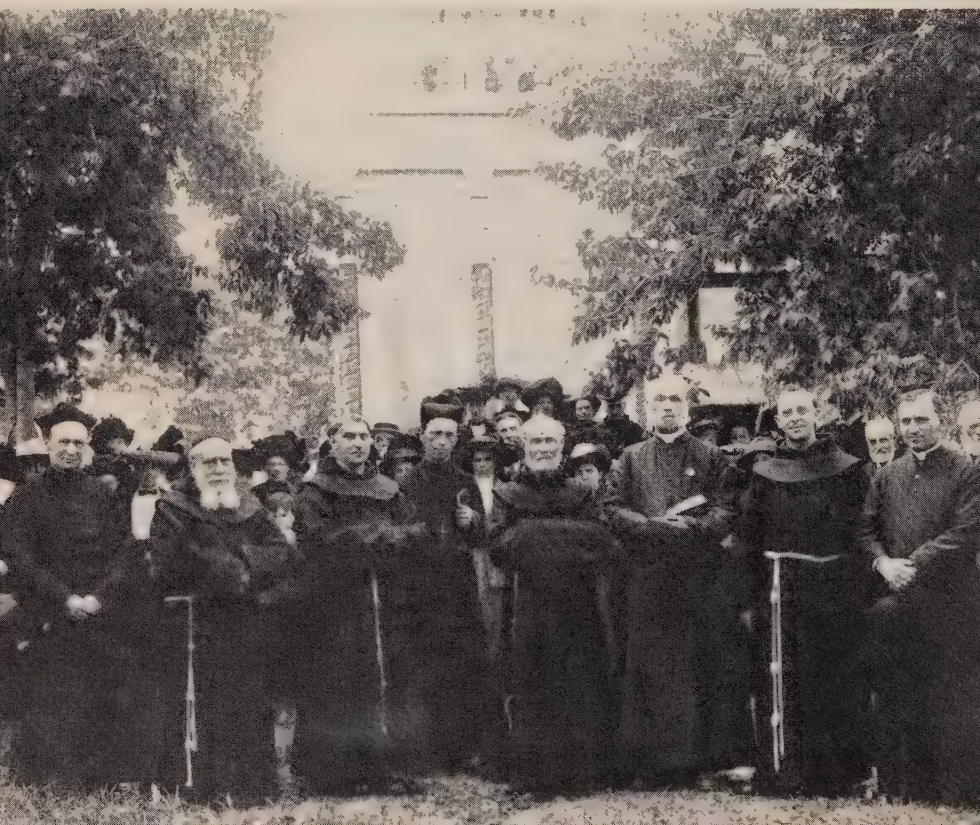
As is well-known, on August 2, the faithful can gain the Portiuncula Indulgence, which is of Franciscan origin, by visiting a church of one of the three Orders of St. Francis or a church which has a special indult. By fulfilling certain conditions, they can at each visit earn a plenary indulgence for themselves or in favor of the souls in Purgatory.

Fifty or sixty years ago this very valuable indulgence was almost unique in the world. Only a little publicity sufficed to attract the crowds who came from everywhere to gain it. A certain Montreal streetcar driver at the turn of the century claimed that he transported the largest crowds of the whole year on August 2. Nowadays several kinds of indulgences that are similar to that of the Portiuncula have somewhat diminished the latter's popularity.



Ceremony of the Pontifical Crowning of the Statue of Our Lady of the Cape
in 1904 (from a contemporary photograph).

Group at a ceremony at the Shrine of Our Lady of the Cape about 1915, from left to right: Rev. C. Boissonneault, O.M.I.; Fr. Augustin Bouynot, O.F.M.; Very Rev. Ange Marie Hiral, O.F.M., Provincial; Rev. A. Faure, O.M.I.; Father Frederic; Rev. Eugene Duguay, former pastor at the Cape; Fr. Ethelbert Sambrooke, O.F.M.; Rev. A. Lemire of Trois-Rivières.





The ecclesiastical tribunal in the Chapel of St. Anthony in Trois-Rivières at the solemn opening of the Apostolic Process of the Cause of Beatification of the Servant of God on June 19, 1946, with His Excellency the Most Reverend Maurice Rby, then Bishop of Trois-Rivières, presiding.



Top: interior of the Crypt, with the Tomb of the Servant of God in the center.

Bottom, left: the author of this book, Father Romain Légaré, O.F.M.

Bottom right, from left to right: Father Ludolphe Ayotte, O.F.M., Guardian of the Crypt; Msgr. A. P. Frutaz, from Rome; Father Hector Frechette, O.F.M., Vice Postulator; and Father Conrad Morin, O.F.M., Ex V. P.



As he had done in Bordeaux, Father Frederic strongly advocated this indulgence in the Province of Quebec. His great devotion to the Feast of the Portiuncula was based, like that of St. Francis, on his love for souls, the souls in Purgatory and the souls of sinners, and also on some personal memories which had deeply moved him: he had had the happiness of visiting several times and of studying the celebrated Shrine of Our Lady of the Angels (or Portiuncula) at Assisi; moreover, he had had the joy of attending there a Feast of the Portiuncula, to which fifteen to twenty thousand pilgrims came from distant places.

Beginning in the afternoon of the day before, he remained in the pulpit nearly the entire day of August 2 to help the people to pray and gain the indulgence. On August 2, 1888, and several subsequent years, he went to the rural parish at the Vieilles Forges de Saint Maurice near Trois Rivières; in 1890, to Shawinigan in the Diocese of Trois Rivières; one year he celebrated the Portiuncula Feast in the Franciscan Church in Montreal, another year in the one in Trois Rivières or in the Church of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary in Quebec. These Feasts of the Portiuncula which Father Frederic directed became famous and were described in enthusiastic terms in newspaper and magazine articles.

One of them, celebrated in the Franciscan Church in Montreal at the end of the last century, gives an idea of the tremendous amount of work which it required of its organizer.

At that time the Franciscan Church on Dorchester Street West had only the lower church. The Feast of the Portiuncula opened with the solemn chanting of the First Vespers (i. e. on the afternoon of August 1), and it attracted a very large number of the faithful. Sometimes the crowd was so big that the sermon was given outdoors.

After the chanting of Vespers, Father Frederic went into the pulpit, where he explained the indulgence to the people, inspired in them the right disposition, urged them to reap a rich harvest of plenary indulgences in favor of the souls in

Purgatory, and directed the prayers. Thus he stayed in the pulpit while the faithful came and went. He left it only when it was time for supper and the recitation of the breviary. The friars were already seated in the refectory when he entered. As usual his supper was extremely restricted: a cup of tea, a few vegetables, and some bread.

After finishing his supper in a few minutes, he said to Father Colomban, the Guardian: "With your permission, I will go and pray with the people."

The church was not closed all night. Many of the faithful continued their visits under Father Frederic's direction. This lasted without interruption until four-thirty in the morning. Then the Father said his Mass and distributed Holy Communion, ending when the friars entered the choir at five-fifteen for their morning meditation and office.

While the Fathers were celebrating their Masses, he recited his breviary, took an hour and a half's rest, and returned to the Church to pray with the faithful. A large group quickly gathered around him and followed him in and out of the church, answering the prayers which he said out loud.

After the Masses were over, he went back into the pulpit and continued, like the day before, to preach and direct the prayers and visits. This lasted until noon. Then he went to the refectory and took a meal that was just as small as his supper the night before, except that he added a little soup. The friars were still eating when he was back in the pulpit again. "The faithful must not lose their time," he said as he left the refectory.

He did not leave the pulpit until it was time for the Solemn Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament and the chanting of the *Te Deum* at sunset.

But, as if the day had not been busy enough for him, as soon as the singing of the *Te Deum* was over, he gave still another talk to the crowd that filled the church. The number

of people who wanted to hear him was so great that they filled the aisles and even the confessionals.

For about three quarters of an hour he spoke on "the good which the Franciscan Order has done for souls all over the world throughout the centuries." His voice was just as clear and strong and penetrating as if he had not spoken recently at all. During those forty-five minutes he captured his audience's attention so firmly that not the least sound was heard, and their recollection and attentiveness did not relax for an instant.

One of Father Frederic's companions has given these interesting details about that day:

By a careful count I found that during this Portiuncula Feast, from the first Vespers (August 1) until his evening sermon (August 2), Father Frederic spent twenty-five hours in the pulpit, either preaching or reciting the rosary aloud. It is not possible to imagine the excessive fatigue that such labor must have made him feel. The visits were made in the lower church, and the heat was very great. The number of visits reached an astronomical total during the day of August 2. I myself made a count at four different times, twice in the morning and twice in the afternoon. The people went out of the two side doors, and the result was the same each time: two persons went out every second. Estimating that the time devoted to visits was thirty hours, we can without exaggeration count 216,000 visits.¹

In 1896 the Feast of the Portiuncula fell on a Sunday. The Franciscan Church in Montreal remained open all night at the request of the sales personnel in the stores who wanted to obtain the indulgence after work on Saturday. That year Father Frederic spoke for nearly twenty hours without intermission. He left the pulpit for Matins at night and to celebrate Mass on Sunday morning. Instead of his meals, he took a little wine in the pulpit. "Don't be shocked," he warned the faithful. "Some wine has been brought to me, and I am going to drink it in order to gain strength." When he left the pulpit at sunset on August 2, he didn't seem at all tired, and he continued to lead the prayers and the veneration of the relics.

He made a great contribution to the popularity of the beautiful Indulgence of August 2 in the Province of Quebec by his sermons and by his booklet entitled *La Portioncule ou Grand Pardon d'Assise*, which was published in 1898.

His spirit of faith and devotion was especially evident during pilgrimages. By his many activities and by his presence, he strongly encouraged pilgrimages to the great Canadian Shrines which are today National Shrines. They have been magnificently described in these terms: "Sainte Anne de Beaupré, Our Lady of the Cape, and the Oratory of St. Joseph on Mount Royal are a radiant triptych which the hand of God has enshrined in the fairylike scenery of our Laurentian land."

Father Frederic had intimate links with that glorious triptych of shrines: he was a fervent promoter of the first, the co-founder and "prophet" of the second, and also a promoter of the third and especially a moral support of its humble founder, Brother André.

Pilgrimages of the Tertiaries of Montreal by steamer to Sainte Anne de Beaupré or to Cap de la Madeleine were certain to be outstanding successes if they could count on the presence of the "holy Father Frederic." It was in fact he who from the beginning gave them that characteristic spirit of devotion, recollection and penance which they later maintained and which truly religious pilgrims found so charming. People used to say: "When you want to go on a pilgrimage and pray a great deal, you must go with the Third Order."

As a matter of fact the entire journey, going and coming, was one continuous prayer and sermon, interspersed with hymns. A pilgrimage by steamer from Montreal to Cap de la Madeleine (and return) took twenty-four hours, and from Montreal to Sainte Anne de Beaupré thirty-six hours. Father Dugas, director of the Third Order at Sainte Anne des Plaines in the Diocese of Montreal, once wrote about Father Frederic: "During a pilgrimage to Sainte Anne de Beaupré the pilgrims heard him speak for at least four consecutive hours without showing the least fatigue." And Father Dugas added con-

scientiously: "I do not believe that he had to give an account to God for any useless words." When he stopped preaching he led the prayers or hymns. When the pilgrims traveled by train, his task was more difficult. He went from one car to another and stimulated them to fervor in prayer. His greatest consolation was to pray with the faithful.

When the group arrived at Sainte Anne de Beaupré, he went up the *Scala Santa* (Holy Stairs) and stirred the pilgrims' devotion by talking on the Passion of Our Lord. He stood at the top of the Holy Stairs and recited the prayers aloud with the pilgrims. He helped to hear the confessions. He devoted his free time, either in the sacristy or in the vestibule, to listening to the numerous pilgrims who told him about their sufferings or their spiritual or temporal needs, while he comforted and encouraged them.

We can only corroborate this splendid testimonial which Father Lévesque, a former Redemptorist Provincial, gave him: "The Reverend Father Frederic Janssoone, O.F.M., was a fervent devotee of Good St. Ann, a tireless herald of her glories, a zealous propagator of her cult, and an active promoter of pilgrimages to her famous Shrine of Sainte Anne de Beaupré."²

The Friar cultivated a very special devotion which the first Recollect Franciscans had implanted in Canada: devotion to St. Joseph. He was certainly one of the pioneers who encouraged people to go to the Oratory of St. Joseph in Montreal, and he was undoubtedly the instigator of the pilgrimages which the Franciscans of Trois Rivières made to that shrine beginning in 1911.

Brother André, C.S.C., the humble promoter of the Oratory who died in the odor of sanctity in 1937, declared that Father Frederic's encouragement was a valuable help to him in the difficulties involved in the foundation of the Oratory, which is now world-famous. The missionary from the Holy Land saw the will of God in this undertaking which encountered some opposition in the beginning. He urged Brother André

to persevere in his devotion to St. Joseph, saying that the great Saint would remove the obstacles and that one day the little chapel would become a great shrine consecrated to his cult.

As a intimate friend of Brother André, the Friar used to visit him and recommend intentions to him, for Father Frederic considered him a great friend of St. Joseph. Brother André served the priest's Mass several times at the Oratory.

Once there took place between these two holy souls a competition in humility which would be a fine subject for an illustrator of the *Fioretti*.

Father Frederic arrived at the Oratory and said: "I have come to ask Brother André how he goes about being so saintly."

The rector accompanied him to the little chapel and climbed the stairs to the attic in which the Brother lived. The latter came down and when he approached Father Frederic, the friar fell on his knees and exclaimed:

"Bless me, Brother André."

"Oh, no, Father, it is for you to bless me, since you are a priest."

And there they were, each of them kneeling before the other in a noble conflict of humility. What a delightful re-enactment of the meeting of St. Dominic and St. Francis of Assisi! Finally, both religious, still kneeling, exchanged the kiss of peace.³

Father Frederic became something of a "legendary" character. Those who knew him are unanimous in noting his popularity. A mere announcement that he was going to preach was sufficient to fill a church. However, he attached no importance at all to his own popularity. What was then the real basis of his fame?

The themes of his sermons were in no way out of the ordinary. They did not contain any lofty theology. This man of God preached, as his Seraphic Father had recommended, on "vices and virtues, punishment and glory." He proclaimed the love of Jesus Crucified and the goodness of His Blessed Mother. He spread knowledge of the Shrines of the Holy Land. He explained the holy Gospel and applied it to daily living in a way which his listeners found striking. Throughout his life he had a passionate love for the Church. Before 1880 and long before the decree of St. Pius X, he advocated frequent Holy Communion. The usual subjects of his sermons were the great truths of religion, the love of God and the Blessed Virgin, and other topics of piety and devotion.

He took pleasure in narrating the legends and miracles of the Saints and the extraordinary events which have resulted in the foundation of pilgrimage shrines.

Because he was consumed with zeal for the salvation of souls and the glory of the Church, it was always his intention not only to induce the faithful to practise the commandments of God and of the Church, but also to practise the virtues of the religious life in the world. He sought out exceptional souls who were capable of making sacrifices. That is why he preached so much about the Third Order of St. Francis.

His remote preparation for preaching had been excellent. He worked a great deal and meditated still more.

The fourteen little blue notebooks which he had used in the seminary are evidence of his hard work. His minute handwriting had recorded anecdotes from the lives of the Saints in two of them. This collection was used in many of his sermons in the Holy Land.

The immediate preparation for his talks usually took place before the Blessed Sacrament, and he wrote an outline on a sheet of paper. It was the Word Incarnate who gave them their apostolic tone and their supernatural vitality.

Father Frederic's ability in speaking may be explained by such factors as his wide reading, his rich experience of people and places, and his frequent meditations.

He was able to develop his method of preaching in order to make it more effective. At first he attempted oratory in the grand manner. This was the method he used in France, in the Holy Land, and no doubt during his first stay in Canada, if we may thus interpret the enthusiastic reports in the newspapers of Trois Rivières in 1881: "The sermon given [by Father Frederic] was a real masterpiece of eloquence."⁴ "Each evening crowds thronged into the sacred temple to listen to the learned and eloquent sermons of the Reverend Father."⁵ "The way he spoke yesterday was that of one of the greatest sacred orators."⁶ "This distinguished religious from the Holy Land is one of the most stirring preachers that can be heard."⁷ "An immense audience was deeply moved by the very strong and gripping words of the distinguished preacher."⁸

Toward 1899, his definitive return to Canada, he abandoned this grand style in order to adapt himself to the people. Henceforth he chose by preference the simple and familiar style for which he became known in Canada.

One of the missionary virtues of Good Father Frederic was the generosity of his adaptations to the different countries in which he served. The pliability of his mind and his supernatural love for souls — all souls — instinctively led him to follow St. Paul's lesson example: "With the Jews, I was like the Jews, in order to win the Jews to Christ."⁹ With the people of French Canada, Father Frederic even used typical French Canadian phrases and expressions.

His style of preaching, therefore, was popular but not common. It was always simple, anecdotal, abundant, often overlong, but always supernatural and apostolic.

Not long after Father Frederic's death, the characteristics of his preaching were vividly summed up by Father Benoît Salvail, O.F.M.:

Father Frederic was not an orator. He did not preach; he talked to his listeners, he conversed with them in a familiar way about the good God. His preaching, especially in his last years, consisted less in sermons than in the uninhibited musings of an old man who loved God and who let his heart speak freely. You did not find in his talks those qualities of style which fastidious persons usually seek, for he was utterly and deliberately averse to the vain flourishes of what St. Paul calls "the rhetoric of human wisdom." And yet how devout and sincere he was! What an apostolic tone! How well we could feel in him the ardor of a truly supernatural soul who has no other goal but the glory of God and the salvation of souls! And that is why the faithful did not tire of listening to him. They liked his plain and simple language which was full of warmth, or rather full of fervor, which they could easily understand and which moved them, which went from his heart right to their hearts.

Who has not heard him during pilgrimages or Portiuncula Feasts preach the word of God for whole hours, with the ever captivating charm of his inimitable way of talking, which was deliciously flavored with personal memories, touching incidents, and pleasing anecdotes, and which sometimes made the congregation laugh and then cry? ¹⁰

As soon as the "holy Father" appeared in the pulpit, the audience was impressed by his recollection, simplicity, and humility. His movements were not those of a great orator. He spoke without gesturing, with his eyes usually lowered and his hands in his sleeves. His eyes seemed to open only to look up to heaven. His tone was gentle, his voice clear, penetrating, and sufficiently powerful. His enunciation was distinct. The expressive features of his ascetical face faithfully reflected, within the frame of his thin beard, the play of his emotions.

As an informal talker rather than an orator in the usual sense of the word, he would speak to the faithful in a conversational tone, as to friends, expressing himself clearly and always in very good French. "He did not talk about ethereal things," as a good old woman told me; she retained a moving memory of his sermons. To be understood by all and to have an influence on their hearts was enough for him. Though

simple, clear, and interesting, he was able to become eloquent, as he captivated the congregation and led it along his line of thought and feeling. He took an independent attitude toward the rules of rhetoric and paid little attention to a systematic order and planned outline of a subject. He knew how to develop secondary topics and could pass smoothly from one subject to another by perfectly natural transitions. And although he occasionally spoke for a long time, he did not tire his listeners, who followed his narrative with the same close attention which they would give to a fictional story. Sometimes he would speak on a subject that was quite different from the one which had been announced. Some of his colleagues used to make fun of his method of preaching. One day these jokes must have hit their mark, for during his next sermon, like some distinguished orators, he specifically mentioned the various points of his discourse: "This is my first point... now here is my second point... and finally I come to the third point." Thus he demonstrated that he knew the rules of oratory as well as others, but he preferred the liberty of the Holy Spirit which blows as it wills...

He liked to use examples from the lives of the Saints. He would describe something — for instance an anecdote concerning a Saint or some circumstance of Our Lord's Passion — with a real descriptive skill which made his sermons always interesting despite their length.

He spoke freely and easily, without hesitating, helped by his excellent memory. He usually spoke for a long time — too long to please some persons. But most of the faithful did not seem to mind. Scholars listened attentively, as did the illiterate. And after having talked for hours and hours, he did not appear to be any more tired at the end than at the beginning. This facility in giving long talks on religious topics was one of Father Frederic's characteristics.

Sometimes this facility resulted in incidents. Here is one which is told by an eye-witness and which throws light on the friar's obedience.

Father Frederic was scheduled to speak on a major feast day in the small chapel of the friary in Quebec City, which was located on the ground floor where the parlors are now. But the Father Guardian, either because of lack of time or because of fatigue or simply because he knew his man, had told the preacher to end the sermon exactly at seven o'clock. Father Frederic began with these words: "My dear brethren, I have a fair knowledge of my good Canadian people, since I have been living among them for quite a few years. Now there is one virtue which they greatly lack and which they greatly need — and that is patience."

Next, for about ten minutes, he quoted texts on patience from the Bible and the Epistles of St. Paul and St. James. Then he slipped into his favorite fault: telling edifying stories.

He had time to tell one long story. And he launched into another. Right in the middle, at a crucial moment when his listeners were almost holding their breath, the clock mercilessly struck seven times. Father Frederic immediately stopped his narration and said: "My very dear brethren, the Reverend Father Guardian specifically advised me to stop at seven o'clock. I am obeying him, and I will continue my story for you the next time. May the good God bless you, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost! Amen."

Nevertheless the Servant of God strove to reconcile the ministry of preaching with certain exigencies of charity. At one time he preached every Sunday in the Chapel of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary in Quebec City. It was usually in the afternoon, before the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. The chaplain, Father Paquet, remarked to him: "Father Frederic, you are preaching for too long a time. Have pity on the servants who have to go home soon enough to prepare dinner."

During his sermon on the following Sunday, the Friar glanced at his watch and notified the congregation: "I have been advised not to speak for a long time. The servants who

have to leave to prepare dinner may do so. *And I am going to continue."*

In his retreats to the Carmelite Sisters in Jerusalem, he always preached standing before the choir grill, and he used to speak for a long time. In order not to upset the community's schedule too much, he would say to the cook: "Go back to your work."

No doubt he often used this solution. Thus at one of the two annual retreats that he preached to the Franciscans in Montreal, one in 1898 and the other in 1899, he prolonged a talk in the morning more than usual. But he did not forget that man lives from the Word of God and from bread, for when the time came, he dismissed the cook with these words: "The Brother cook can withdraw to prepare the meal." And while the other friars remained in their seats, he continued his talk.

On a Feast of the Assumption at the convent of the Precious Blood Sisters in Trois Rivières, he enacted an incident with all the delightful simplicity of St. Francis of Assisi. Fearing to speak beyond the time granted for his talk, he had asked his companion, Father Augustin, to let him know when his time was up. At the right moment the latter faithfully fulfilled his assignment and stepped up bravely, saying: "Father, that's enough." The preacher stopped right in the middle of a sentence, smiled, bowed his head, and stepped down from the pulpit to kneel at his prie-dieu, where he remained absorbed in profound adoration until the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament was over.

On another occasion an anecdote of the Golden Legend was renewed: an act of faith earned a meal prepared by "angels."

During the week of February 16-23, 1890, Father Frederic preached two triduumms in Worcester, Massachusetts: one given especially to some lay tertiaries who wanted to join the Little Franciscans of Mary, and the other to the parishioners. It

seems that he devoted the entire afternoon of Sunday, February 23, to the daughters of St. Francis, who were than at the beginning of their foundation. In his talk, he urged them not to be afraid to make extraordinary acts of faith when required in order to accomplish their devotions.

And the apostle with a reputation as a performer of miracles immediately gave a specific example. His retreat sermon, which had begun at three o'clock in the afternoon, extended beyond the customary one hour. Father Frederic spoke about the good God, His love, His mercy. He praised the joyful humility and the trusting poverty of St. Francis. He spoke with growing fervor and emotion, and time slipped by. At first the Sisters were enthusiastic and receptive, but after being attentive for two hours, their maternal instinct regained its rights and their minds turned toward the orphans that they had left in the care of the older children, and also toward the supper that had not been put in the oven. The speaker noticed this distraction on his listeners' faces, and he very calmly reassured them: "You are worrying about the children. Don't worry — your angels will take care of them." Then he continued his talk. At six o'clock, the retreatants found the children in the refectory in perfect order, more "angels" than ever, enjoying a meal which had been prepared by the older ones.¹¹

We may note in passing that Father Frederic was associated with the first foundation of the French-Canadian Little Franciscan Sisters of Mary in the United States. He gave them the benefit of his valuable encouragement, holy instructions, and practical advice, especially regarding the community's daily schedule. That he was rather severe toward the two Founding Sisters on his second visit to Worcester, in March, 1891, on two occasions, was due to the fact that he had been misinformed, as he later admitted to the nuns with much regret and humility.

His sermons lasting an hour or an hour and a half were not rare. But at about the age of sixty, he resumed more customary limits. On February 28, 1902, he wrote to Father Colomban Dreyer, guardian of the friary in Montreal: "I always advise our young Fathers to avoid an excess of zeal

in the pulpit and being over-long. I myself have committed that fault all my life; today I make it a rule to preach on retreats: morning sermon, three quarters of an hour; afternoon, half an hour. This seems to please everyone."

This humble Friar assembled around his pulpits crowds as great as any famous preacher might desire. People felt a veneration for him and treated him as a saint who was able to perform first-class miracles. In the midst of this general esteem, he attributed everything to God. For he did not seek to shine but to edify, as much by the example of his life as by his words. To explain is good, but to show by one's own example is better.

Certain cultured persons could not grasp why his preaching was so popular among ordinary people. They not unwillingly remarked that the Father's talks were sometimes a bit loosely constructed, without heeding, however, the underlying unity which constituted their real strength: a great love for God which continuously exercised a very gentle and penetrating influence on souls. This kind of eloquence did not come from logical reasoning or the structure of sentences, but from the sheer power of virtue and from holiness of life. It was the eloquence of the heart, the eloquence of tears. It was the soaring of a heart that loved God and wanted to make others love Him. That is why Father Frederic's way of preaching has been compared to that of the Curé of Ars or of St. Francis of Assisi. Actually it was similar to the apostolic eloquence of St. Paul, who said:

When I came to you, I did not come with pretentious speech or wisdom, announcing unto you the witness to Christ. And my speech and my preaching were not in the persuasive words of wisdom, but in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith might rest, not on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.¹²

While Father Frederic's eloquence enlightened the minds of his listeners, he had a special gift for touching their hearts and making them shed tears.

Some of his fellow friars, because of their intimacy with him, ventured to make fun of him at times by telling him that he knew just what tone of voice to use in order to make the congregation weep. But many witnesses still remember having heard him preach with an unction which cannot be simulated and with sincere tears in his voice. He had a sensitive heart and a tender religious compassion. Despite his desire not to attract attention and to conceal his own feelings, it sometimes happened that, when he read certain passages aloud in the refectory, the tone of his voice betrayed his emotion, obliging him to stop reading and to pass the book to his neighbor.

This eloquence inspired by his warm heart brought about marvelous results: it induced generous souls to advance spiritually; it effected great increases in the membership of the Third Order; and it converted sinners. In a retreat which he preached to the girls in the convent-school at Champlain in the Diocese of Trois Rivières, Father Frederic spoke in such a persuasive way about vanity that the pupils were stirred by his words and spontaneously took off their jewelry. A priest of the Diocese of Quebec told me that three sailors in the village of Deschambault had become men of remarkable piety at the turn of the century, and they did not hesitate to say that they had been converted by a sermon of Father Frederic. The former manager of a prosperous lumber company owed him his Franciscan vocation: many persons in Quebec City remember Good Father Joseph Roy (1864-1941) — "Père Jos," as he was familiarly called — an original and apostolic priest who used to cheer up the gloomy by inimitable impersonations and who, despite his picturesque and salty lumberman's vocabulary, possessed a generous heart and a faith so profound that astonishing feats were attributed to him.

All in all, Father Frederic's way of preaching was inspired by solicitude for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. Even in his conversations he spoke of God. He liked to engage in what he used to call "little spiritual recreations." The only complaint that he was sometimes heard to express

was the age-old complaint of preachers: "Faith is diminishing!"

Penitents found him kind and gentle in the confessional.

The truth of the missionary's words was reinforced by his many virtues, as by a muted choir. And the faithful responded by a spontaneous offering of their confidence.

In his missions Father Frederic always showed himself a man of prayer. He spent long intervals before the Blessed Sacrament during the early morning hours and in the course of the day.

He succeeded in communicating his devotion to the people. At Saint Ubald de Portneuf, which he visited on the first of January in two successive years (1890 and 1891), he made an extraordinary impression: he achieved the rare feat of keeping the parishioners in the church throughout New Year's Day! And yet for the rural French Canadians that was the principal day in the year for family reunions. The farmers dined in the village and did not go home until dusk, putting off their family feast until another day. They were glad to say on going home: "We spent the day in church with Father Frederic!" It was as though they had just spent a day in heaven. It is true that our Catholic people were more devout in those times than today.

The unusual mortification of this modern disciple of the Fathers of the Desert always amazed his contemporaries.

Before going on a nine-day retreat at Sainte Anne de Beaupré, he submitted his diet to the superior of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary:

After Benediction, I shall begin a novena. I wish to observe absolute silence toward everyone; and you will be so kind as to leave me my diet just about like last year.

In the morning, just a cup of black coffee, served in silence. At noon and in the evening (also in silence) a potato, some bread, with a cup of tea (without milk) — nothing else: no butter, no dessert, **nothing**.

I have two great favors to obtain: one from good St. Ann and the other from St. Anthony! ¹³

Father Frederic's reputation for extraordinary virtue was one of the causes of his success in the apostolate. It also explained his popularity among the sick. But the latter's confidence in his power to perform miracles was a source of "enormous" fatigue to him. He confided to the Very Rev. Father Raphael Delarbre on April 7, 1889:

In a few minutes I am going to open the great eight-day retreat. Sainte Geneviève [de Batiscan in the Diocese of Trois Rivières] is a parish of 1500 to 1800 souls with only one pastor. The two of us will have all the confessions, and the sick are waiting for me with the invincible conviction that I can heal them, if I wish. This is an enormous moral strain on me, and it forces me to take heaven by violence. Ah, if only our Father St. Francis would send here for us another Blessed Brother Salvator of Horta to cure these sick people! ¹⁴

The confidence of the sick was often rewarded. Nowadays we still meet persons in many places who tell us: "Father Frederic visited our home. I was ill — my foot was hurting — my eyes were hurting — Father Frederic made the Sign of the Cross over me and my pain vanished."

Here is a cure which amazed an entire parish. The Friar went to preach a triduum to the Third Order fraternity in Loretteville (Saint Ambroise de la Jeune Lorette) near Quebec City, from December 17 to 20, 1896. As usual, he did not fail to visit the sick tertiaries.

Mlle. Laura Falardeau, aged twenty-seven, was seriously ill with lock-jaw and had been unconscious for nine days. On Saturday, December 19, the doctor told her family: "She will not live through the day. If she is not dead after the Father has had supper, I will go to the rectory and bring him here."

That evening the doctor returned with the missionary and the vicar of the parish, Father Antoine Lamothe. The home was crowded.

Father Frederic went into the sick girl's room with Mme. Falardeau.

The vicar said sceptically to the persons around him:

"Does this mean the Father is going to bring the dead back to life?"

But soon afterward, when he suddenly heard the sick woman's voice, a strong though sepulchral voice, coming from the depths of her chest as from a cask, he was gripped by emotion, startled, and perspiration broke out on his forehead. Everyone present was stirred and kept a profound silence. Some wept tears.

Here is what had just occurred in the bedroom. When Father Frederic had prayed intensely, the sick girl opened her eyes. She seemed to be awakening from a heavenly vision.

"My God, how beautiful it is!" she exclaimed with radiant features.

"You have seen the beauty of heaven," answered the Friar. "What do you prefer — to stay on earth or to go to heaven?"

"May the holy will of God be done!"

"Those are golden words! Well, you will remain on earth, but you will have trials all the time."

On coming out of the room Father Frederic said to the girl's father and brother.

"Tomorrow, Sunday, during the *Sanctus*, let her walk three steps."

(Was he thus recalling the pious custom of our ancestors who liked to have their children take their first steps during the *Sanctus* of the High Mass?)

"The day after tomorrow, have her walk six steps, and on the third day nine steps, and then let her go wherever she wishes."

Everything happened as the Father predicted, both as to the cure and the subsequent trials, such as diseases of the eyes and throat and a wound in the side. Five or six years after her cure, Mlle. Falardeau lost the power of speech, which she has not recovered. I have had several interviews with her in her home. She expressed herself in writing or by signs. If necessary, her older brother Charles, with whom she lived, interpreted what she meant. In February, 1958, she was still her joyful self despite her eighty-nine years. Her trials had not robbed her of her charming smile and good humor. She always considered Father Frederic as her protector. Thus she attributed to him her recovery from an attack of pleurisy in 1949 which was almost fatal. Her brother Charles died on October 31, 1952.¹⁵

Father Frederic was perhaps the most tireless preacher of our times. To preach for forty-five years without apparent fatigue, to edify the faithful for twenty-five or thirty-six consecutive hours during the Feasts of the Portiuncula or the pilgrimages to Sainte Anne de Beaupré constitutes a record that is almost without parallel. His greatest success therefore lies in his achieving preeminence along with other great preachers of the Franciscan Order, such as the founder himself, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Anthony of Padua, St. Bernardine of Siena, St. James of the March, St. Peter of Alcantara, and St. Leonard of Porto Maurizio.

Chapter 18

THE APOSTOLIC WRITER

Is the spoken word more powerful than the written word? This question has long been a subject of debate among rhetoricians. Father Frederic answered it in the most practical way imaginable: he used one medium as intensively as the other.

As a matter of fact I do not believe that anyone in Canada before him made a greater contribution to the spread of good books: he wrote about thirty books and booklets, and distributed over 160,000, a tremendous total for those times.

Moreover, he contributed articles to French, American, and Canadian magazines, such as the *Revue Franciscaine* of Bordeaux, *Saint François et la Terre Sainte* of Paris, *The Pilgrim of Palestine* of New York (now *The Crusader's Almanac* of Washington, D. C.), the *Revue du Tiers Ordre* of Montreal, the *Annales de Sainte Anne*, and several others. He founded two French Canadian magazines, the *Annales du Très Saint Rosaire* and the *Revue Eucharistique, Mariale et Antonienne*.

He left about five hundred letters addressed to bishops, priests, Franciscans, nuns, relatives, and various persons. We also have a good number of his manuscript notes.

Therefore it is evident that the Servant of God wrote a great deal. Some years ago Father Hugolin Lemay, O.F.M., of the Royal Society of Canada, compiled a bibliography of his writings.

Here as in his preaching it was an apostolic intention which motivated Father Frederic and inspired his writing.

The problem of good reading in the Province of Quebec was a subject of much concern to him. He wrote to his principal confidant, the Very Rev. Father Raphael Delarbre, O.F.M.: "Oh, if the Pope of the Rosary deigns to give his blessing to our *Annales* and to recommend them to our dear Canadians, what good that will do in our dear little country where the devil is laboring especially just now in a frightful way to ruin faith in souls! Good reading is more necessary than ever!!!"²

His several attempts to found magazines had no other aim than to oppose bad reading materials and thus to respond to the ideas expressed by the Canadian hierarchy.

At the turn of the century intellectual charity undoubtedly needed widespread diffusion in our country. With inspired insight, our Franciscan apostle foresaw all the power of good reading: the necessity to oppose the forces of evil, to enlighten minds with sound doctrine, and to establish in the will a firm faith, like a temple built on a rock for the glory of God.

He easily passed from plans to action. Thus by means of his magazines and his books he became a pioneer propagator of good reading among French Canadian families, especially in the rural population, which was then more numerous than the city dwellers.

The activity of this Friar amazes us. It extended into several ramifications. We are already acquainted with his principal religious undertakings; but we should also mention some others which involve the social apostolate: a temporary acceptance (about 1894) of the assignment of rural missionary in the Trois Rivières area, plans for an orphanage for rural children, and propaganda to spread the use of the sugar-beet to the point where he was sometimes called "the sugar-beet Father." In many respects he was in advance of his times. He undertook a number of successful projects in the literary field. In order to explain such vitality, Father Frederic's soul seems to me to have been gifted with a splendid blossoming vigor. His apostolic plans were continuously being conceived

and matured in his mind, like flowers blossoming one after another on a tree. However, we must grant that the flower did not always guarantee the fruit for this son of St. Francis.

Here is an example of an interesting plan which was sidetracked towards a successful substitute which still continues to radiate in these times.

In 1893 Father Frederic thought of publishing a magazine entitled *La Semaine des Familles* in order to spread the taste for good reading in families. It was to be a small weekly magazine of twelve pages per issue. The subscription price was to be only fifty cents a year. The outline of the contents included four principal parts: 1) legends of the Saints; 2) marvels in the spheres of nature and grace; 3) amusing and instructive anecdotes; and 4) the recreational part: puzzles and games. Father Frederic declared that "*La Semaine* would be mailed to its subscribers early enough to reach their homes before Sunday. Travel accounts and interesting stories taken from the Annals of the Franciscan Order and elsewhere can also be added."

Forty-four years later the Canadian Franciscans founded a monthly family magazine adapted to modern times, *La Famille*.

The plans for the weekly magazine evolved and took another direction. After negotiations with Father Louis Paquet, the chaplain of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary in Quebec, and with their Superior, Mother Mary of Charity, the *Revue Eucharistique, Mariale et Antonienne* began to appear in January, 1900. That magazine became the organ of the Perpetual Adoration Association which had its center in the chapel of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary in Quebec. Father Frederic went begging from door to door in the archdiocese for funds for the shrine of his Sisters in St. Francis and at the same time collected subscriptions for the magazine. Two years after its foundation, on May 12, 1902, he wrote to the Very Rev. Father Raphael, O.F.M.: "Our beautiful *Revue*

Eucharistique et Antonienne has reached fifteen thousand subscriptions. This is prodigious."

From the first day he was one of the regular contributors. He prepared various series of articles months in advance (some jokers added: including even the chronicle of events of the month).

In the issue of September, 1916, the editors printed a moving tribute to Fathers Paquet and Frederic, who were "so closely united in life that they are inseparable in death." The editorial stated:

It was for a period of fifteen years that they collaborated in publishing the official organ of the [Adoration] Association: the *Revue Eucharistique*. The beloved Father Frederic willingly undertook to provide a third of the contributions; he wrote the articles on the Eucharist, St. Anthony, and the Hour of Adoration; and before going to his last rest, he had just prepared the material for another year, as was his custom, so that even after his death he will still speak to the readers of the *Revue*.

At its golden jubilee in 1950 the magazine recalled the memory of its valiant promoters.

As a pioneering propagandist for good reading in Canada, Father Frederic also encouraged the development of parish libraries. The former librarian of the friary in Bordeaux clearly expressed his apostolic spirit in a letter which he wrote to Bishop Bégin on February 6, 1894:

I have always worked for the development of parish libraries. I have here a little manual for the Third Order which has on its cover a little catalog for a little collection that is just beginning. As you see, Your Excellency, everything is little, because to be little was pleasing to our Father St. Francis. I have marked with a small cross a dozen books which, in my humble opinion, are most suitable for a parish library.

Then, as an alert traveling salesman, he took advantage of the opportunity to recommend to the Auxiliary Bishop of Quebec two of his own books; he very discreetly hinted that

the support of a wealthy patron would be desirable for the publication of a quantity of documents. But as his apostolic intentions were foremost, the author declared himself ready to yield the profits to a favorably inclined publisher. He added:

I have myself ventured to write a life of St. Francis. I did it with the best materials which I found (especially from the devotional point of view) in already existing lives of our Seraphic Father. Your Excellency will find it at the bottom of the list. I also hope that *The Life of Our Lord* will, according to the desire of His Eminence [Cardinal Taschereau] and yourself, find a place of honor in all libraries as well as in all families.

In concluding, please allow me, Your Excellency, to submit an idea to you, also in all simplicity. I have available documents for a series of books to be distributed either as premiums or to be placed in parish libraries. They would have already appeared, but it is the financial resources that are lacking..

If I found a publisher, or better a religious order, a school, seminary, or a bishop that would agree to accept my manuscript, I would offer it gratis, with joy, and furthermore I myself would work at spreading it as much as I could, so that the publisher would get his investment back, with a profit too.

Father Frederic practised the apostolate of the press by means of magazine articles, and in a still more extensive way by means of books.

Three great motives inspired his writing: love for the Holy Land, love for St. Francis and his three Orders, and love for the Catholic religion itself. His books can therefore be grouped in three classes: those that deal with 1) the Holy Land; 2) Franciscan subjects; 3) devotional subjects.

Among the first we may mention his *Notice historique sur l'oeuvre de Terre Sainte* (Historical Sketch of the Work of the Holy Land) (1882), *Le chemin de la croix à Jérusalem* (The Way of the Cross in Jerusalem) (1882), *L'Egypte et les Franciscains* (Egypt and the Franciscans) (1897), and finally the two-volume *Album de Terre Sainte* (Album of the Holy Land) (1905), containing thirty-two full-page illustrations facing a page of explanatory text.

The Notice historique sur l'oeuvre de Terre Sainte is a propaganda booklet, a stirring and forceful summary of the history of the Holy Land, and a warm plea for support of the Franciscan work there by the people of French Canada; it is perhaps one of his best short works and certainly the one in which he included the largest number of autobiographical details in a few pages.

He made known not only the Holy Land itself but also the eminent persons who earned for that privileged country its unique distinction: the God-man, Our Lord Jesus Christ, and His closest relatives, the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph, and St. Ann. Hence this series of works: a life of Our Lord Jesus Christ written in the words of the four Gospels (1894), a life of Good St. Ann (1896), a life of St. Joseph (1902), and a life of the Blessed Virgin Mary extracted from *The Mystical City of God* by Venerable Mother Mary of Agreda, with descriptions of the principal Shrines in the Holy Land (1904).

How was he to give an accurate account of the lives of St. Ann, who is not mentioned in the Bible and is known only by tradition, and of St. Joseph and the Blessed Virgin, concerning whom the Gospels are too restrained for our taste? Our writer turned to a twofold source: 1) pious traditions and holy legends, and 2) the private revelations of Venerable Mother Mary of Agreda, a Spanish Conceptionist Franciscan nun who lived in the seventeenth century and who wrote the famous life of the Blessed Virgin entitled *The Mystical City of God*. To the mystical-biographical warp borrowed from Mary of Agreda, the Commissary of the Holy Land added a Palestinian woof: he devoted several chapters to descriptions of the shrines of the Holy Places which were almost literally taken from the *Guide indicateur des sanctuaires et lieux historiques de la Terre Sainte* (Guide to the Shrines and Historical Places in the Holy Land) by the famous Franciscan guide, Brother Liévin, O.F.M.

The *Vie de Notre Seigneur Jesus Christ* (Life of Our Lord Jesus Christ) by Father Frederic — which a devout old lady

once called the *Life of Father Frederic* by Our Lord Jesus Christ! — was published in 1894. This popular work, compiled from the translation and notes of the Reverend J. B. Glaire, was nothing less than a harmony of the four Gospels. Four years later in France the Abbé Weber made a similar harmony which was destined to be widely successful. The Friar's book included some pictures of the Holy Land which carried "the reader in spirit to the very places where Our Lord uttered His divine teachings." The devout Franciscan's aim was to make Jesus better known and loved and "to see the book of the holy Gospels in the hands of everyone."³ He had been thinking of such a work since 1880, that is, since the beginning of his first term as Vicar Custodial in the Holy City of the Messias.

During two or three months of the winter of 1893-1894, he withdrew into solitude and worked at writing the life of Our Lord for ten to twelve hours a day. Out of reverence for the Holy Scriptures, he kneeled while transcribing the Gospel texts. Then, equipped with the written approbations of several Canadian bishops, he set out to publicize and distribute the book himself. By 1907 it had run through eight printings totaling forty-two thousand copies. It was undoubtedly the greatest bestseller in Canada for a long time. In 1906 the *Revue du Tiers Ordre et de la Terre Sainte* stated (pp. 250 ff.):

More than thirty-six thousand copies of the *Vie de Notre Seigneur Jésus Christ* (or Harmony of the four Gospels) have been distributed by Father Frederic in Canada, and in one diocese, that of Quebec, there are very few families who do not own at least one copy of that precious work. In order to achieve that result, Father Frederic did not spare himself, and he has been seen going through the countryside and visiting the most remote farm-houses in all kinds of weather and in all seasons of the year.

In the Diocese of Valleyfield Bishop Emard gave him a favor which amply rewarded him for all his labor and trouble. Not only did His Excellency grant to the itinerant apostle of the Gospel "all the encouragement in his power," but he ob-

tained from Pope Pius X in Rome the concession of the following petition:

Very Holy Father,

Father Frederic of Ghyselde, a religious of the Order of St. Francis, having undertaken, with the approval of the Ordinary, to go through all the parishes of the Diocese of Valleyfield in order to distribute to every family, if possible, the holy Gospel of Our Lord, and wishing thereby to labor, according to the intentions of Your Holiness, at "restoring all things in Christ," and especially, Christian homes, the undersigned, Bishop of Valleyfield, humbly kneeling at Your Holiness' feet, very respectfully begs You to grant to the same Father Frederic and to his work the benefit of the Apostolic Blessing and to extend that Blessing to all the persons who will respond to his appeal.

(signed) JOSEPH-MEDARD,

Bishop of Valleyfield

St. Pius X wrote the requested blessing with his own hand at the bottom of the petition:

To Our dear son Father Frederic, of the Order of St. Francis, to his works and all who shall respond to his apostolic preaching, We whole-heartedly grant the Apostolic Blessing.

Pius X, Pope.

For his burning zeal as both writer and propagandist, Father Frederic deserves the title of *apostle of the Gospel in Canada*.⁴

His Life of St. Francis of Assisi, which was written in a simple and unctuous style, was very successful; it is still today the most popular biography of the Poverello in Canada. The second and third editions were revised: the second in 1913 by Rev. Valentin Breton, O.F.M., and the third in 1942 by Rev. Jean Joseph Deguire, O.F.M.

Among other works on Franciscan subjects — several of which have been republished in recent years — we should mention his life of St. Anthony of Padua (1896), a booklet for children on St. Anthony (1905), a life of the Canadian Re-

collect lay brother Didace who died in the odor of sanctity in 1699, and several works on the Third Order.

Among various devotional writings were brochures on the Month of the Holy Rosary (1895), a Novena to the Holy Spirit (1897), two volumes of anecdotes for children from the lives of the Saints (1905), and a book on Heaven: *Le ciel, séjour des élus* (1912). Several of those works were republished in recent years.

His book on Heaven included a treatise on the angels by St. Thomas Aquinas, some mystical doctrines from the writings of St. Teresa of Avila, facts and stories from the lives of the Saints, and some of the author's ideas on Christian asceticism. This 400-page volume was the last which Father Frederic himself published. He considered it his most beautiful book and the one which was most effective in inspiring devotion in souls. Consequently his patience was sorely tried when, after submitting the manuscript to his superior in 1909 for approval, he heard nothing about it for a long time. An absent-minded censor held the manuscript up for more than two years! That was enough to make the author worry. On May 14, 1911, he wrote to the Very Reverend Colomban Dryer, O.F.M.:

You know, Very Reverend Father, that there is nearly nothing of my own in this book, as in all the others. But I put a great deal of work into collecting the documents, and I thought, if I am not mistaken, that this book would be the most complete in its field, if it is published! ⁵

A few years before, he had mentioned to the Very Reverend Raphael Delarbre his life of St. Francis "which they consider here, especially Archbishop Bégin, a real pearl. I rejoice all the more because there is nothing of myself in it. I merely supplied the rhapsody, and I succeeded." ⁶

It is evident that Father Frederic was above all a compiler and a popularizer.

He had the temperament required for research, as is proved by the numerous references to source materials which

he recorded in his manuscript notes. He was ever on the lookout for some helpful materials, and he studied both the past and the present. While touring the deserts of Palestine, he sought out the bedouins in order to study their social customs; and while doing research in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris or apostolic work in Canada, he took notes on the history of the Recollect Friars in New France.

His initiation into works on spirituality took place in the novitiate and seminary. Father Léon de Clary, O.F.M., the author of *The Lives of the Saints and Blessed of the Three Orders of St. Francis*, used to have Father Frederic prepare his manuscripts for the printer because he was well known for his neat handwriting. The devout young friar easily developed a taste for that kind of work. From his contacts with Father Léon in Amiens, Limoges and Brandy, came his first book, a life of Blessed Jeanne Marie de Maillé, which appeared only after his ordination.

It is difficult to unravel the personal contribution of Father Frederic in his biographical compilations and to find traces of his personality. He effaces himself before God whom he wishes to glorify like St. John the Baptist before the Messiah. Often he hides behind an editorial "we." This Franciscan friar agreed with Pascal: "The 'I' is hateful." Nowadays we tend to agree with Paul Valéry's witticism: "The 'I' is always hateful, but it is the 'I' of others."

In his booklet on the Third Order in Canada, which appeared in the *Revue du Tiers Ordre et de la Terre Sainte*, Father Frederic quoted a laudatory report of his canonical visitation of the fraternity in Trois Rivières in October 1888:

The venerable Friar, who had taken as his text the words, "God is admirable in his saints," developed the theme with a gentle and unctuous eloquence. While listening to this worthy son of St. Francis speak of the virtues of that admirable Saint, of his profound humility, his voluntary poverty, and his unalterable meekness, we felt that he wished to communicate to our souls the feelings of admiration and love which he himself had for his

beloved Father. So everyone's heart was touched, and they experienced a new devotion toward the famous founder of the great Franciscan family.

But "the worthy son of St. Francis" moderated this too flattering report by a comment inserted in a footnote at the bottom of the page, in which he wrote, using the editorial "we": "Every time that our humble self is humiliated in this kind of report, we will let the writer's words stand, and we will humiliate ourselves still more, in order thereby to obtain the greater glory of God and the spiritual good of souls." ⁷

The personality of the compiler is revealed in his choice of subjects (which are a clue to his interests) in his judicious selection of materials taken from the best sources, and in his very simple and devout way of presenting them. The few autobiographical details which he ventured to give to the public were nearly always added as footnotes: travel notes or personal memories or comments.

This man of God did not have the temperament of a poet or a flighty writer. But as George Eliot said, some persons have the heart of a poet and not his voice. If we do not usually find the voice of a poet in Father Frederic's writings, we can perceive at certain moments, as with nearly all humans, the heart of a poet. He delighted in the popular poetic spirit of "gracious and innocent legends." In his times the critical science of history had not yet imposed its basic criterion, which is exclusively the stony beauty of proven facts.

In him we note rather the talents of a man of action, a businessman, a publicist, with the practical character of someone who observes events with insight.

As he was gifted with a real understanding of what is timely and valuable as propaganda, he often used his talent as a writer in the field of journalism. Thus as soon as he arrived in Canada in 1881, he publicized in the daily newspapers his Franciscan mission, the work of the Holy Land,

the role of the Third Order in modern times, and the spiritual treasures of the Way of the Cross.

With his flowing journalistic style, he was an excellent narrator. His account of his apostolic missions in Canada in 1881-1882 is very interesting.⁸

His practical character comes out in his love for precision and his attention to minute details. It can be observed in any of his books or articles, but particularly in his diary of his journey from France through Italy to Palestine.⁹ His observations are often expressed in figures; they were his way of stressing something and its importance. One would think that he always took along with him on his journeys a folding tape-measure or a collapsible yardstick and that he had a compass in his head. He notes that he personally measured various monuments, and he carefully records their exact dimensions. The small and only window of the narrow and low cells of the hermitage of the Carceri near Assisi "measures very exactly eleven inches in height and its width is naturally still more limited."¹⁰ One of the nails of St. Peter, which is venerated at the Basilica of the Twelve Apostles in Rome "is a regular iron: it has a square shape, measuring about two inches in thickness and ten inches in length; we can therefore guess the indescribable sufferings which the holy Apostle had to endure in his crucifixion for love of his Divine Master."¹¹

This busy apostle did not have time to repolish his style. Often he had to labor far into the night to get his correspondence, articles and books done. He wrote as he spoke. His style, like his speech, was clear, simple, spontaneous, and lively. A sensitive and contagious love for God infused into his writings a sweet and penetrating unction. Without being aware of it, even under an impersonal semblance, the author revealed his own heart.

His writings are those of an apostle, of *a man of God*, not those of a literary man, nor of a scholar, nor even of an apologist who argues with opponents. Father Frederic always stressed that his books were written "not for science but for

religion." Therefore we should not try to find in them either erudition or original syntheses of spirituality or history.

Such writings, however, were perfectly adapted to the two principal goals at which the author was always aiming, either separately or simultaneously: propaganda and edification.

When he wrote his works, which he later sold from door to door, the former linen salesman bestowed all desirable skill — for the greater glory of God — on the title-pages of his books, even down to the subtitles: "Life of Our Lord Jesus Christ, written in the very words of the four Evangelists and enriched with 33 selected pictures of the Holy Land with explanatory captions; The Month of the Holy Rosary, enriched with 15 beautiful pictures of the Holy Land; Good St. Ann, with 22 beautiful full-page illustrations."

Nowadays some people make fun of so-called "edifying books," especially since André Gide uttered his cruel witticism: "Bad literature is made with fine feelings." Some novelists easily draw therefrom this conclusion: real literature is only made with bad feelings and low morals.

No doubt some persons today may not find to their taste some of Father Frederic's "edifying" books, yet those volumes fully attained their goal at the time when they were written, and that is a real achievement. Today several of them still prolong their good influence in revised editions.

Gide's witticism would not have troubled Father Frederic. It was enough for him to be in the company of the Saints. And with his "edifying" books he certainly shares in the tradition of St. Bernard of Clairvaux and St. Francis de Sales.¹² That is his best defense.

St. Bernard speaks of those who study 1) just to acquire knowledge — and that is curiosity, 2) to be known — and that is vanity, 3) to be edified — and that is prudence, and 4) to edify others — and that is charity. Father Frederic obviously belongs in the last group.

As in other fields, here too he established a unique record: his writings were doubly constructive, in the broadest sense of the word, i. e. spiritual and material construction. While building up a love of God, religion, and virtue in souls, he also contributed, by the sale of his books and by appeals, to the construction of monasteries and churches.

Toward the end of his life, the former messenger-boy of Estaires became a traveling salesman of God. He went from diocese to diocese, from parish to parish, from house to house, selling his books, and collecting substantial contributions for religious communities. He went through the Diocese of Quebec for the Adoration Church of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, the Diocese of Valleyfield for the Chapel of the Poor Clares, the Diocese of Joliette for the Sisters of the Precious Blood, and finally the Diocese of Trois-Rivières for the conventual church and friary of the Franciscans.

Father Frederic was an all-around apostle of the Gospel. He labored intensively at propagating it, and he practised to a heroic degree its two great fundamental precepts: love of God and help of one's neighbor.

CHAPTER 19

LAST YEARS

In his beautiful book, *The Evening of Life*, Bishop Louis Baunard give us his conception of old age: "it is not a decline, it is progress; it does not descend, it ascends." No doubt the body becomes curbed: "This old invalid is bowing under the weight of sixty years' work in the service of an immortal queen." Nevertheless that majestic queen — the soul — is drawn onward by her lofty desires, her higher aspirations, her ideas and dreams of life beyond, and she ascends calmly toward a summit that is invisible though very close. From the elevated plateaus of life, the old man discovers extended views and vast horizons.

Father Frederic's old age was a rising and broadening culmination of his life. As he climbed toward the heights of generosity, his angle of vision came closer to God's. It was a stage in which he gathered and concentrated his strength for the last stretch and spread his charity like a fan over several dioceses of the Province of Quebec, one after another.

However, like a sanctuary lamp, the dream of a *ritiro*, a peaceful retirement, still burned in the soul of the aging missionary from the Holy Land. If only he could devote himself to prayer and the praise of God, far from all his professional concern with collecting funds! That dream of his first years as a priest pursued him in the midst of his extremely active life. He wrote to one of his correspondants: "May I hope to go to Mount Thabor with Father Augustin to end my days there in solitude? ¹... I feel an irresistible desire

to ask the Very Reverend Father General to relieve me of my duties [as Commissary] so that I may become a real *Franciscan* again before I die: it seems to me that for the last fifteen years I have not been one at all. What do you advise me to do?" ²

In order to resolve this inner conflict, his confidant replied: "Make yourself a *ritiro* in the depth of your heart." This was equivalent to the answer which St. Clare and Brother Sylvester gave to St. Francis when he was hesitating between two paths of spirituality, contemplation or the apostolate: "You must live not only for yourself. You must let others profit from what you have received."

Father Frederic gave up another enticing desire: that of withdrawing with his old friend, Father Augustin, in the Commissariat in Trois Rivières, and living a life of silence and prayer there. Thus he might give himself to contemplation, without having any responsibility for funds, and at the same time console the afflicted who came to ask for prayers or cures.

But that splendid saying of St. Martin of Tours — "I do not refuse labor" — kept re-echoing in his mind, and he said to God: "Lord, if I can still be of some use to Your people, despite my longing for solitude and despite the burden of my age, I do not refuse the work."

He was concerned about preparing his soul for eternity. Before crossing the threshold of his Father's house, the old missionary collected his strength and labored untiringly for the glory of God and the good of souls. He wanted to gather his harvest into the barn before the storm.

At an age when the body requires a slower pace, he undertook a great series of religious expeditions. First he assumed the task of going throughout the immense Diocese of Quebec, in order to use up "the remnants of his life," as he jokingly put it. He was well aware of the exhaustion which awaited him but he could not let slip by a splendid

opportunity to increase his merits, to do penance, and to practise charity. Far from being a period of rest which he certainly had earned, the last twenty years of his life were perhaps the most active of all. It was truly a life that ascended in sacrifices and in love of God and neighbor. It was also a life that was expanding to ever wider horizons.

On May 17, 1892, five French-speaking Franciscan Missionaries of Mary landed in Quebec City. Their vigorous new Order had been founded only fifteen years earlier and already had houses in three parts of the world. The foundress, Mother Mary of the Passion, was happy to offer a fourth continent to the zeal of her daughters during that year which marked the fourth centenary of the discovery of America by the Franciscan Tertiary Christopher Columbus.

The five nuns reached their destination on May 20: Baie St. Paul, a large village situated in the mountainous region in the Diocese of Quebec, on the northern bank of the St. Lawrence River, sixty miles below Quebec City. They came in answer to an appeal from the pastor, Father Ambroise Fafard, a fervent Franciscan Tertiary. With the approval of his Ordinary, Bishop Bégin, he had written on January 28, to Mother Mary of the Passion. He had invited her to found a house there and had asked her to send him some experienced nuns, for a few years at least, in order to help him train in the Franciscan life the novices of a new Canadian Order, the future Little Franciscans of Mary.

But in the interval between the request and the foundation, Bishop Bégin had been chosen as Auxiliary of Cardinal Taschereau, Archbishop of Quebec. It was a great disappointment to the Franciscan Sisters not to be dealing with the Bishop who had summoned them, especially as they realized that Baie St. Paul, being so far from the metropolis, was not suitable for the first community of these missionary nuns in the New World. After a stay of five weeks they decided to go to Quebec City and explain their fears to Bishop Bégin. They asked him to transfer their little community there. He granted the request, and the Cardinal ratified it.

One of their dearest ideals, however, still preoccupied the Franciscan Sisters: that of fulfilling as soon as possible their function as adorers of the Holy Eucharist. Just at that time (1894) Bishop Bégin, wanting to carry out the wishes of His Holiness Pope Leo XIII, desired to establish perpetual adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament in his diocese. On seeing these nuns, he thought that they were just the ones for that great project. He saw in his mind's eye the thoroughly Catholic city of Quebec crowned by a Shrine of Perpetual Adoration, as Paris already was by the Shrine of the Sacred Heart in Montmartre. The hill on which the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary timidly began to build their convent was to become a high place of prayer above Quebec, for it was destined to be the center of the Perpetual Adoration Movement in the diocese.

Consequently, they needed a larger chapel. The new building arose like a Host that is made from innumerable ground grains of wheat and that conceals the God of Love. It was the fruit of devoted labor and of diocesan campaigns for funds symbolized by the wheat grains of Christian charity. It therefore appeared to everyone as the true Eucharistic center of the citizens of Quebec. The names of three founders are connected with its beginning: its sponsor and protector, Bishop Bégin, and its two principal apostles, Father Louis Honoré Paquet, the chaplain of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary for twenty years (1895-1915), and Good Father Frederic.

The latter was the most active collaborator. Once again he showed himself a faithful servant of the Church and of the Pope: he was carrying out the directives of the reigning Pontiff Leo XIII with regard to perpetual adoration as well as other important projects, such as the work of the Holy Land, the spread of the Franciscan Third Order, the devotion to the Rosary, and the campaign for good reading.

First of all he asked the Mother General of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary for permission to establish a small

printing press in the convent on the Grande Allée in Quebec City. Then he confided to the nuns the printing of several of his books, including the biographies of Jesus Christ, the Blessed Virgin, and St. Joseph.

Once the books were printed, he set out to sell them, going through the country districts at the cost of great fatigue. He made himself a traveling salesman and a beggar for his sisters in St. Francis in order to help them build a worthy temple for the Eucharistic Christ. In January, 1896, he brought them six hundred dollars which he had received in Christmastime appeals. Furthermore, in June, 1896, he formally undertook to collect four thousand dollars by selling his *Life of Our Lord* and by begging from house to house. We must remember that a dollar was worth more in those times than nowadays. The church was to cost about thirty thousand dollars.

The effectiveness of his work was determined by obedience. All that he achieved for the Franciscan Sisters was done with the approval of his superiors and with the whole-hearted encouragement of the Auxiliary Bishop of Quebec. Bishop Bégin requested from the Franciscan Minister General in Rome, through the Father Procurator, the permission for Father Frederic to make the collection in the one hundred and fifty parishes of his archdiocese, that is, to visit more than twenty thousand families. This "tough job," as our peddler called it, could not be done without special help from heaven. He took nine and a half years to accomplish it: from the spring or summer of 1895 until December, 1904.

He performed this new apostolate either on foot or sometimes in a carriage, in all kinds of weather, especially in the fall and spring and during the winter, for he was usually in charge of the pilgrimages at Cap de la Madeleine during the summer. However, he devoted nearly the entire year 1898 to this collection for the Perpetual Adoration Shrine.

Here is how he usually worked: the archbishop assigned to Father Paquet the task of planning the itinerary and of

arranging with the pastors the date of Father Frederic's visit, while the Franciscan Sisters prepared the relics and the coupons to be distributed. On the scheduled day the missionary arrived in the parish, and the alerted people went to the church. Father Frederic described the work of Perpetual Adoration and displayed the book that he was distributing for the benefit of that work. The faithful then went to the sacristy and deposited the price of the book, usually one dollar, for which they received a receipt or coupon which gave them the right to claim a copy of the book when the number of ordered volumes later reached the parish. Father Frederic also gave each subscriber a small souvenir from the Holy Land, for instance, a bit of stone from the house of St. Ann. "It always succeeds wonderfully," he used to say. "Without the relics, it would not succeed."

The pastor usually gave him a double list of visits to make to sick persons and to the homes of some families in the village or countryside where he could expect to collect funds. In certain places, by unanimous request, he visited every house.

Taking up again his former work as traveling salesman, though now in God's service, the sixty-year-old friar set out, as alert and erect as a young man. With his bare feet shod only in sandals — often even on some winter days — and wearing a short yellowish cloak that seemed to be as old as he was, the Holy Land missionary reminded people of Jesus of Nazareth traveling about, doing good. His visits brought joy, light, and consolation. For he was already famous. For years he went thus on foot or in a carriage from diocese to diocese, from parish to parish, from door to door, receiving whatever welcome was in store for him.

He wrote to Archbishop Bégin about the "unexpected success" of the official opening of his campaign in Lévis, and added: "In order to visit, as I have promised, all the families [of Notre Dame de Lévis], I will need twenty to thirty days, walking for ten to twelve hours a day! God be blessed! It does some good!"³

By the middle of August, 1899, he had distributed copies of his life of Our Lord Jesus Christ in more than half the parishes of the Archdiocese of Quebec, as we learn from a letter which Father Paquet wrote to Archbishop Bégin: "As to the pastors who have already received Father Frederic — and there are about eighty of them — they do not miss an opportunity to tell me, either in person or by mail, how much they appreciate the good and the edification that the Father spreads in the parishes."⁴

While Father Paquet personally supervised the construction of the Shrine of Perpetual Adoration, Father Frederic pursued his charity rounds: going from one house to another throughout the Diocese of Quebec, placing in each home a copy of his *Life of Our Lord* (and in 1904 his book on Mary Immaculate), collecting in return some alms for the diocesan shrine and thus associating all the faithful, all families, with the Adoration Society.

Thanks to his fame, he collected a great deal of money. We do not know exactly how much. On returning from his tours, which were often quite long, he would hand over the result of his collections, with obvious joy to the Mother Superior. Father (later Bishop) Ange-Marie Hiral, O.F.M., the founder and first guardian of the friary in Quebec City, was an eye-witness of one of these returns. He was amazed to see so much money come out of Father Frederic's pockets.

Archbishop Bégin used to joke with this extraordinary fund collector by calling him "Father Klondike" — at that time everyone was talking about the gold rush to the Klondike mines in Yukon.

But Father Frederic would protest: "I, a son of St. Francis!"

He did not mind such jokes, but he found in this particular one less a glorification of his talent as a collector of funds than a challenge to his love and personal practice of poverty.

At the turn of the century he was engaged in several undertakings at the same time: directing the pilgrimages at Cap de la Madeleine, erecting outdoor Ways of the Cross, and writing books. These projects achieved perfect success despite some pessimistic forecasts. In fact the results seemed to surpass the means used. His friends joked with him concerning what they called his daring strokes. Thus one day Father Paquet said to him:

"Father, you should have bought the land on which the city of New York is built. You could have resold it at a good profit for your work."

"You may laugh if you wish," replied the Friar. "I would certainly have done so if I could and if I thought I could do some good."

Archbishop Bégin saw the completion of the Shrine with profound joy. On behalf of his entire diocese he offered it to the Eucharistic Christ and consecrated its main altar on February 5, 1903. The inner happiness of Father Paquet and Good Father Frederic when they attended that ceremony would be difficult to describe. On that day all their labor was rewarded. At the time, this Shrine was undoubtedly the most beautiful church of all the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, as their magazine often stated, giving all the credit to Archbishop Bégin and his devoted collaborators.

In its French Renaissance style the Chapel charms and attracts. It has an atmosphere of spiritual well-being and happiness. It is the home of the God of charity, the God who has forgiven and redeemed the world, thereby giving it love, peace, hope, and joy. It is decorated with simple and pure taste, and its curving lines are gracious and harmonious. Many tourists, including non-Catholics, do not fail to visit it during the summer. It is reported that several Protestant tourists have become converts as a result of their visit. The whole atmosphere of the Chapel gives them a feeling of the Real Presence. A secret life-giving power with a mysteriously overwhelming influence emanates from that illuminated

altar on which stands an imposing golden monstrance, before which several white-robed nuns are always kneeling in adoration.

Father Frederic described the Chapel with the insight of an artist and a craftsman. On September 24, 1902, he informed the Very Reverend Father Raphael Delarbre, O.F.M., the foremost advisor of Mother Mary of the Passion in Rome:

The church with the facade is finished (for the Sisters' use), also the sacristies and the rectory. It has cost about 300,000 francs [i.e. about \$60,000, according to the exchange rate at the time; consequently twice the amount Father Frederic had foreseen]. There is not a shadow of luxury in this monument, but it is a real success, and everyone admires it, especially the crowds of tourists who flock to Quebec every summer. All that remains to be done is to organize pilgrimages, but we shall leave that work to others.

The Chapel was dedicated to St. Anthony of Padua. Father Frederic, with his interest in striking apostolic projects, would have liked to make it a national shrine of the great wonderworker. He wrote to the Mother Superior of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary in Quebec City: "Our great wonderworker must have his *national shrine*, just as Good St. Ann has in Beaurpré and Our Lady of the Rosary at the Cape!"⁵ He left to others the care of carrying out that major project.

After the Diocese of Quebec, he set out to conduct his visits in that of Valleyfield, south of Montreal. After the Sisters of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis, those of the Second Order were to benefit from his devotion. To them he personified the solicitude of the Poverello for his "little plant" Clare.

On the morning of April 17, 1902, at the Grotto of Mary Immaculate in Lourdes, five Colettine Poor Clares — two of whom were French and three Canadian — attended with angelic fervor a Mass marking their departure for Canada.

And a few days later, on April 26, these foundresses, dressed in their rough grey habit and wearing sandals that

were nothing but a piece of wood which only made walking all the more difficult, were welcomed with veneration in Valleyfield. During their first few months they lived in the convent of the Sisters of the Holy Family.

On August 10, when they moved into their temporary monastery next to the parish church of Notre Dame de Belle-rive, the entire Catholic population of the episcopal see gave the daughters of St. Clare an ovation which filled them with dismay. A long procession of members of the clergy and religious organizations conducted them from the cathedral to their new San Damiano. A carriage drawn by white horses and bearing the statue of Our Lady led the parade. Each of the Poor Clares rode in a separate carriage escorted by three Ladies of Charity, presenting a moving sight for angels and humans. This procession may have recalled to some the solemn entrance of St. Colette into seclusion in her hermitage cell adjoining the Church of Notre Dame-en-St.-Etienne on September 17, 1402. Bishop Joseph M. Emard of Valleyfield presided at the ceremony and delivered a sermon on the contemplative life and the vocation of the Poor Clares.

The little community gradually increased, and its humble home became too small for the number of postulants who wished to join it.

In 1905 the Very Rev. Colomban Marie Dreyer, O.F.M., preached a retreat to the nuns, and was sorry to see how small their quarters were in the absence of a real monastery and in the absolute impossibility of their admitting new members. It was then that he confided to the Abbess his idea of putting Father Frederic in the service of the Poor Clares for some time. He also submitted the project to Bishop Emard, who gladly approved it. Father Frederic went to see the Bishop at the end of 1905 in order to make a definite agreement with him. After obtaining the Bishop's approval, he made his preparations. He had the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary print several thousand copies of his *Life of Our Lord Jesus Christ*.

On April 10, 1906, Bishop Emard sent a very encouraging letter from Rome to the administrator of the diocese, in which he wrote:

I am happy to learn that the excellent Father Frederic will be setting forth to go throughout the diocese and labor to distribute, if possible, in each of your families the sublime book which retraces the life, recalls the teachings, and narrates the whole story of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Not only do I whole-heartedly approve this work to which the worthy religious is so good as to devote himself, but I also bless him with all my soul, and I wish to give him all the encouragement in my power. I will tell the Holy Father about it.

It was on that occasion that the Bishop of Valleyfield obtained from Pius X an apostolic blessing for Father Frederic and for all who supported his work. After stressing the importance of spreading the Gospel, Bishop Emard added in the above-mentioned letter:

If, besides those spiritual advantages, which are the primary objective of the work, there should result, thanks to the generosity of the families, a material profit, it would be applied to strengthening the establishment of our Poor Clares of Valleyfield; and the definitive foundation of the monastery would add even more to the merit of good Father Frederic and of those who shall have responded to his appeal. I therefore hope that the work as a whole will have all possible success.⁶

Accompanied by the prayers of the Poor Clares, Father Frederic set out on his mission on Easter Sunday, April 15, 1906. The first Abbess wrote later:

He had one or several boxes of books sent ahead to the parishes, and afterward he would go to every house in them, selling each book for a dollar for the benefit of the monastery. Wherever he went, he was welcomed with enthusiasm, and his passing by was a sermon. The summer was especially warm, and the good Father traveled on foot, bare-headed, under a fiery sun, as he did not wish to accept the comfort of being driven from one place to another. We suffered a great deal at the thought of all the sufferings which that venerated Father took upon himself for us. One

day I could not prevent myself from telling him of our sympathy and compassion. He replied in a penetrating tone of voice: "My dear Mother, just think — to acquire merits for heaven, to do acts of charity for paradise!" Nevertheless, the intense heat fatigued him a great deal, and his sick legs began to refuse to serve him; then, in the fall, he was obliged to return to Montreal. He came back the following spring and went through the parishes which he had been unable to visit.⁷

On September 11, 1906, the Abbess wrote to the Franciscan Provincial: "At the chancery they expect that the Reverend Father Frederic will certainly collect six thousand dollars, which is wonderful for so small a diocese."

In fact he himself stated that he distributed more than six thousand volumes at a dollar each in the Diocese of Valleyfield.⁸ She believed that anyone else but Father Frederic would not have collected one third of the amount which was turned over to the diocesan procurator.⁹

Thanks to the generosity with which the faithful eagerly responded to the friar's appeal, the construction of the new monastery was begun on September 14, 1906, the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross.

At the end of each week Father Frederic brought in the amount needed for the weekly wages of the laborers. He often visited the site and with a happy expression on his face watched the monastery rising up. He was glad to see its adequate dimensions. The work progressed so rapidly that the building was blessed on November 24, 1907.

In September, 1911, Father Frederic again took up his visits for the Poor Clares in the Diocese of Valleyfield.

An unexpected gift from a benefactress made possible the completion of the chapel in time for the celebration of the 700th anniversary of the Poor Clare Order in March, 1912, and it was definitively opened for services on August 12 of that year, the Feast of St. Clare.

God's traveling salesman performed the same apostolic work of spreading good literature and collecting funds in the

Diocese of Trois Rivières in favor of the friary and conventual church of the Franciscan Fathers (1908-1909) and in the Diocese of Joliette in favor of the Sisters Adorers of the Precious Blood (August, 1909 - June, 1911).

He also had a keen desire to come to the help of the Trappistine nuns at St. Romuald near Lévis after his mission in Joliette. But in his zeal he forgot that he was then seventy-two years old.

During these mission tours he collected a considerable amount of funds. And that is undoubtedly a fine result. But it cannot be compared to all the spiritual good which he accomplished wherever he went. In truth he contributed toward both material and spiritual building. Contemporary testimonials are unanimous: Father Frederic's visit in each of the dioceses was looked upon as a true mission. The memory of his good deeds still endures.

Even today there are many people who knew Father Frederic only through his selling books in their parish. They recall, in the home of their childhood, the old man with the white beard and the emaciated but kind and gentle face, bare-headed and bare-foot, dressed in a strange and poor-looking costume, who was considered "a saint" by everyone. He took an interest in the children, put his hand on their head, blessed them by tracing a cross on their forehead, and often he foretold their vocation.

In 1900 he went into a little schoolhouse in the village of Saint Tite des Caps (Diocese of Quebec), and said to a six-year-old girl who was sitting near a store on a small bench next to a companion:

"You, little girl, will become a nun."

After having touched the child's forehead with his crucifix, he had her kiss it.

That little girl has been a Sister of Our Lady of Perpetual Help for many years now. She remembers the incident very well.

In 1903 the missionary was selling his books in the little parish of Sainte Agathe de Lotbinière (Diocese of Quebec). A five-year-old said to him as he gave him the money for the book:

“Will you please pray for me so that I become a priest?”

As he had not understood the child who spoke very low from bashfulness, Good Father Frederic had him repeat the question. Then his features lit up. His penetrating look seemed to plumb the future as he gazed at the child, and he quickly replied:

“I am going to give you my blessing, and you certainly will become a priest.”

Twenty years later the boy said his first Mass. He will always gratefully remember the friar’s promise.

Our good country people especially, who were simpler and more profoundly religious than most of the city-dwellers, welcomed him with joy as an envoy from God. They liked to enhance his reputation for sanctity still further. They were filled with admiration for this old man who, despite his seventy-odd years and his exhausting travels, did not in any way curtail his austerities. In the eyes of all, he was the personification of virtue, modesty of the eyes, poverty of habit, charity in word and action, fidelity to his Rule, austerity of penance, forgetfulness of self, the power of prayer, zeal for souls, and love of God. Often our reading of Holy Scripture remains a dead letter. But whenever a man appears who fully lives the Gospel, people have no trouble in grasping the contrast between the spirit of the world and the spirit of Christ.

Testimonials of their belief that this brown-robed friar was a saint, even a miracle worker, are innumerable. A thick book could be written describing the miracles which the clairvoyant faith of the humble attributed to him.

Let us gather a bouquet of these flowers from each of the dioceses through which he traveled, doing good.

It was in 1895 or 1896. Father Frederic was selling his books in the Diocese of Quebec. He stayed for some time at Saint Charles de Bellechasse.

One morning he spent a few moments chatting with his altar boy, who was eight years old:

"What is your name, son?"

"Antonelli Gosselin."

"Are you the only child in your home?"

"No, there are nine of us. But I have a little sister who is very sick. She is going to die."

"Oh! She must not die. I will go to see her."

The sick girl's mother had great confidence in Father Frederic. "I am not rich" she said. "But if Father Frederic helps my little girl I will buy his book."

The Friar went to their home. The nine-year-old girl's life had been given up by the doctors. She had been sick since the age of four and was now suffering from tuberculosis of the bones. There were fourteen sores on her left leg. The missionary slipped his cord around the leg and blessed it. In less than a month the sores ceased discharging and bit by bit the skin re-appeared over them. The sores never came back. The girl became so healthy that she married and had twenty-three children. In 1952 she was still enjoying excellent health.¹⁰

Mother Marie Joseph of Jesus the first Abbess of the Poor Clares of Valleyfield attributed the cure of her sick eyes to the intercession of Good Father Frederic. For nine months she was unable to read and could barely see enough to move around. Fearing complete blindness, she consulted a specialist, who diagnosed glaucoma. At the same time she wrote to Father Frederic, asking him to visit the monastery when he came to Valleyfield. She was sure that she would be healed if he gave her his blessing. Guessing what she expected him to do, in his humility he did not want to consent to her pious

scheme, so he just sent her a relic from the Holy Land to place on her eyes. When he came to Valleyfield, the Poor Clares again urged him to visit the monastery, but he only conveyed to them the message that he was sending his blessing to the Mother Abbess. A few days later the cure had taken place. And when the specialist came, he determined, after a careful x-ray examination, that all traces of the sickness had disappeared. "What Saint did you pray to," he asked the nuns, "for I find nothing at all — and yet there certainly was a glaucoma?"¹¹

"May God be blessed a thousand times!" exclaimed a grateful woman. "It was Father Frederic who healed my husband."

The Holy Land Commisary had visited the home of Monsieur Ovide Marion in Saint Jacques l'Achigan in the Diocese of Joliette.

"My poor man, what is the matter?" he said, pointing to the layman's bandaged hand.

"It was caused by a particle of steel."

"I don't understand."

"I was at the iron works watching the blacksmith beating a piece of steel on the anvil when a particle flew onto my hand like a bolt of lightning. At the time it was a shock, but the pain lasted only a minute. And I forgot about it. But three weeks later my hand began to swell and hurt. After a few days we found the steel particle embedded in the flesh. The swelling and pain did not go away. Suppurating sores appeared on the index finger. They were so deep that when treating them with dressing my wife put in them large shreds of cloth. Six months later there was no improvement. Now the doctor wants to amputate my finger to avoid blood poisoning."

"Those operations are painful," said Father Frederic. "It is always a pity to lose a finger."

"That's what I am afraid of," the sick man complained.

"Let me see your hand."

While speaking, the priest made small signs of the cross all around the wound. Then, after raising his eyes toward heaven, he added:

"My friend, you are going to get well."

On that day the swelling began to go down and the sore began to heal.

In gratitude for the alms given him, the missionary brought a cure and joy to a good Christian.¹²

At Saint Paulin, a parish in the Diocese of Trois Rivières, the condition of Madame Henri Plourde was hopeless. In giving his blessing to this good mother, Father Frederic said to her: "You will not die now. You must live on to raise these little children. They need you." And she got well¹³.

At Champlain, not far from Trois-Rivières, people thought they were living through an incident from the lives of the saints. A little four-year-old girl, Suzanne Beaudoin, while playing found herself in a situation which made her cry desperately. Father Frederic went into the house with Monsieur Alfred Sauvageau. Hearing her wailing, he asked:

"Why is that child crying? Is she sick?"

"No, Father. She locked herself in this room while playing with her little sister. She can't get out. We have tried in every possible way to open the door, but we can't."

"I'll have a try," said Monsieur Sauvageau, who was a friend of the family.

"It is locked fast," he declared after several attempts. "I'm unable to open it."

With charming simplicity, Father Frederic immediately remarked:

"St. Francis is quite able to free this child, if he wants to."

He immediately turned the door knob, and raising his eyes to heaven he very gently opened the door, to the intense amazement of everyone in the house. After the two guests had left, the deeply impressed parents fell on their knees and recited the rosary as a thanksgiving to God. They always remained convinced that they had seen "a miracle."¹⁴

Such incidents, which corroborated the friar's reputation for extraordinary virtue, were widely circulated and only increased the general admiration for and confidence in Father Frederic among the people, who are always attracted by the miraculous.

While he was still living, they used to call Father Frederic "*le saint Père*" ("the holy Father"). Cardinal Bégin, Archbishop of Quebec, who had a good sense of humor, liked to tease him about this, and would threaten to denounce him in Rome for usurping a title that was reserved for the Pope.

With his charming smile and usual good humor, the Cardinal liked to tell the following story:

During a pastoral visitation we were calmly driving along with a good man of Saint Pierre de Broughton who was taking us to the next parish. The weather was splendid and we could smell the odor of the freshly cut hay. As we drove along, the farmer said to me with an air of obvious satisfaction:

"I have had two great joys in my life."

"What are they?"

"They are having driven in my carriage the Cardinal and the holy Father."

"But the Holy Father has never come to Saint Pierre."

"Certainly he has. I drove him myself in this carriage."

"But you know that the Holy Father is a prisoner in the Vatican and that he never leaves Rome."

"Oh, I'm not talking about that Holy Father. I mean the holy Father Frederic who went through here distributing the *Life of Our Lord Jesus Christ* from house to house."

The Cardinal enjoyed a good laugh, because he had already guessed who was this new holy Father to whom the farmer was referring.¹⁵

Thus for about fifteen years Father Frederic labored as a traveling salesman of God. It is difficult for us to grasp how much will-power and stamina was required for this novel apostolate which he undertook in his old age. Priests or nuns who make a parish census once a year can guess all the energy and fatigue that this kind of ministry cost the elderly friar as he extended it throughout a whole year and over a period of several years. Here as in other fields, he found a way to **sanctify himself.**

Until the time when a painful sickness forced him to stay in bed, his program was the same, whether he was in his sixtieth or his seventy-second year: to go throughout entire dioceses, from parish to parish, door to door, person to person — heart to heart — for the benefit of diocesan projects — in a word, to do good in one way or another, whether or not people saw or knew it.

He had energetically accepted the hard labor of a pilgrim and beggar, with all its annoyances and tribulations of different kinds. In his selflessness he wanted only a spiritual reward: the greater glory of God, the honor of the Franciscan Order, and the salvation of souls.

Various incidents — some of which are amusing — injected some spice into these endless tours. Dogs of all sizes keeping faithful watch around homes did not take a liking to the costume of this strange “tramp” and even less for the cane in his hand. The cane served as a support for his tired old legs and especially as a defense against the fangs of frightening mutts that were as hostile to strangers as they were faithful to their masters. When the Friar approached, they barked as though he was the devil in person! No matter how much their masters called to them, they could not grasp that they were yapping at a good and holy religious.

“Bijou, stop barking! Come here, Bijou!”

“You call him Bijou?”*

“Yes, Father. Nice name, isn’t it?”

“But he is a naughty dog,” Father Frederic replied with a smile. “This jewel of yours has been snapping at my heels!”

* i.e. Jewel. — Tr.

Usually his trials were more serious. They assumed many forms. In such propaganda campaigns, how many disappointments, unpleasant surprises, and irritating delays he must have endured! At times it was the weather that made him suffer, with its depressing summer heat and humidity, its frequent chilling autumn rains, or its winter cold and slippery ice, or the melting snows and slush in spring. At other times the trials came from human beings: refusals and humiliations from some persons, or disappointments caused by some pastors. One of them announces at the last minute that he cannot have the friar come on the scheduled day, and so the itinerary must be re-arranged. Another makes difficulties and has to be persuaded that the missionary is not working for his own interest but for a diocesan project. Another arranges a very heavy program for the Holy Land Commissary and exploits his good will like a bottomless mine by adding all the extra duties of the parish ministry to his already considerable regular task. At still other times the trouble comes from Father Frederic's own constitution: an attack of influenza, sore eyes or a sore knee or a wound in the leg or foot that keeps him inactive for several days.

The least interruption in his planned schedule involves all sorts of complications for the pastors who expect the missionary on a certain day. The Friar found his only consolation in saying to himself: "I am practising obedience. We are not allowed to complain about circumstances that seem to threaten the success of our projects. The good God has His own reasons for permitting them." So Father Frederic accepted these trials with Christian resignation. He knew the redemptive power of sickness and the sanctifying value of setbacks that are caused by Providence. One day he wrote: "For me as a Franciscan religious, my daily bread must be tribulations and trials. It is along that path that St. Francis wishes to lead his children to Paradise, by Our Lord's example."¹⁶

The reader may wonder just what were the motives for which Father Frederic in his old age undertook the hard task of collecting funds for diocesan projects. Did he not have enough work in connection with the Shrine of Our Lady of the Cape and the Holy Land? We believe that several compelling motives induced him to make those apostolic tours.

First, his love for God and his neighbor.

Next his love for Canada. On April 25, 1910, he wrote to the Mother Superior of the Trappistines of Saint Romuald:

On my first journey to Canada I made a solemn promise to work all the rest of my life for the spiritual and temporal good of this dear country, where our friars were the first missionaries. And I bless the Lord because I have the consolation of having been able to keep my promise for more than twenty years in the small circle of action in which Divine Providence has placed me during about a quarter of a century. That is the motive, Reverend Mother, of the humble service which I am striving to give you in the present circumstances.

His devotion to the three Orders of St. Francis also stimulated him. He collected funds for the Franciscan Fathers, the Poor Clares, and the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary. He was glad to travel throughout the vast Diocese of Quebec, for that task gave him opportunities to establish the Third Order of St. Francis in many parishes, to reinforce the recent restoration of the Franciscan Order in Canada (1890), and to prepare the way for the future foundation of the friary in Quebec (1900).

Finally, his principal motive was his love for the Holy Land and the fulfilling of his duties as Commissary. While working so actively for diocesan projects, Father Frederic wanted above all to serve the Holy Places. It was agreed with the bishops that he was to retain for the Holy Land a certain percentage of the sales price of each book which he sold for the diocesan undertaking. "That is the only possible way to collect alms for the Holy Places," he wrote, "and the General Constitutions of the Order urge the Commissaries to find ways

to collect.”¹⁷ It is a fact that at that time the bishops would not have allowed him to use this method if all the funds were assigned to the Holy Land.

In devoting himself in this way to several causes at once, for the spiritual good of so many souls, our traveling salesman-apostle was putting into practice these thoughts of a Christian philosopher: “Devotion seems to be the ultimate form of virtue. This is because it brings to completion what disinterestedness begins: renouncing oneself, forgetting oneself, giving oneself, losing oneself.”¹⁸

His last years had their human culmination and crowning in two splendid jubilee celebrations.

Jubilee Celebrations

It was only fitting that the twenty-fifth anniversary of the foundation of the Holy Land Commissariat in Canada be solemnly commemorated. This was also a way to pay honor to the humble and devoted Commissary who would otherwise have absented himself from any such occasion.

That Silver Jubilee was celebrated on June 24, 25, and 26, 1913, in the Franciscan friary in Trois Rivières, which was the headquarters of the Commissariat. It was more formal than the holy old missionary's humility would have wished. It was a real apotheosis.

In the words of the report that appeared in the *Revue du Tiers Ordre et de la Terre Sainte* (August, 1913), “we can sum up in a few words what these celebrations were like: they were great and intimate. Great without ostentation, intimate without familiarity, and quite in the appropriate Franciscan spirit. In the whole and in each detail were evident the prudence and good taste of a sensitive and attentive person.” That organizer was the Guardian of the Friary, Father Thomas Denis, O.F.M.

The celebrations began on Tuesday, June 24, in the conventual Franciscan church. The Very Reverend Father Ange Marie Hiral, O.F.M., Minister Provincial and later Vicar Apostolic of the Suez Canal, presided.

A circle of friars, those of the community and delegates from friaries in Montreal and Quebec, with delegates from the Third Order Fraternities of Trois Rivières, gathered in the choir. The nave was filled with a friendly throng in which there was perhaps not a single person who was not obligated to the venerable Father for some help.

Good wishes and speeches were made on behalf of the Provincial, the Tertiaries, and the pastor of the parish.

The Provincial presented to the jubilarian a blessing personally written by Pope Pius X, another from the Father General, and a precious spiritual bouquet of twenty-five blessings from Canadian bishops in memory of the twenty-five years that Father Frederic had spent in the service of the Holy Land. All these blessings were motivated by the highest veneration. Among them were those of Archbishop Bégin of Quebec, Bishop Cloutier of Trois Rivières, and Archbishop Pellegrino Franceso Stagni, the Apostolic Delegate to Canada. Archbishop Bégin, who was made a Cardinal the next year, wrote a very charming letter that deserves to be quoted:

Quebec, June 3, 1913

Reverend and very dear Father:

I am happy to learn that your Jubilee coincides with mine. You have now been Commissary of the Holy Land and I have been a bishop for twenty-five years.

So we are going to celebrate our Jubilees together and unite in thanking the Good God for the graces which He has showered upon us.

Frankly I think you have walked much quicker than I along the road to heaven. You slept on boards, and I in a good bed. You lived on potatoes and salt, and I ate well. You visited the diocese in detail, from house to house, and I only in a "wholesale" way.

You preached up to thirty-six hours at a time, and I an hour and a half at the most. You were called "the holy Father," and I just "the bishop." Therefore I come to the conclusion that you far surpass me in virtues and sanctity.

After these testimonials of veneration had been presented, the jubilarian expressed his thanks in a tone which often betrayed his emotion. He recalled memories of his arrival in Canada and the reception which the faithful of the city and diocèse had given him, adding: "Since that time, Trois-Rivières has been the home of my heart."

The next day, June 25, he sang a Solemn Mass of thanksgiving. Father Augustin gave a talk that took the place of the formal sermon. For it was not a sermon. As someone remarked, even a very eloquent sermon would not have been so good. It was rather a narrative of Father Frederic's life by an eye-witness.

At noon there was a joyful banquet. The former commissariat building, which had become a minor seminary, was made into a banquet hall for the occasion. The tables were arranged in the form of a Holy Land Cross, laden with flowers and fruit.

At the end of the banquet Father Frederic thanked his hosts. He recalled with heartfelt emotion the lessons and example which he had received in his childhood. He did not hesitate to attribute to his mother, after God, all the merit of the good achieved in the course of his ministry. This tribute to his mother was so beautiful that it stirred everyone present.

The celebrations would not have been complete without a pilgrimage to Our Lady of the Cape. It took place on Thursday morning, June 26. About six hundred persons went with the Franciscan community in two steamboats. At nine o'clock, Father Frederic celebrated the Solemn Mass. The Third Order magazine reported:

A brief but interesting talk followed the Gospel. The Reverend Father Valiquette, pastor, outlined the history of the

Shrine, bringing out Father Frederic's contribution. With tactful kindness, he asked the Blessed Mother that he who had given her a crown on earth might one day be crowned by her in heaven..... but after the longest possible delay.

When the Mass was over, Father Frederic went to the monument of the Holy Sepulcher, accompanied by quite a crowd. There he spoke at length to the throng that was eager to hear and see him, to question him and obtain his advice and blessing.

The Oblate Fathers, who had inherited the friar's work and zeal at the Cape, insisted on serving him lunch. A very intimate meal brought the two religious communities together. Father Duguay, who had been pastor at the Cape when Father Frederic had labored there, gave a talk at the end of the meal. He spoke with rare talent and above all with rare affection about the good that had been accomplished at the Cape.

A few days after these very simple yet important celebrations, Bishop Bégin sent another letter to Father Frederic that was filled with cordiality:

I received your portrait with great pleasure. It is a faithful one, and it reminds me of that of St. Leonard of Port Maurizio. It gives me good thoughts by recalling to me your life of devotion, charity, and mortification. The Church is quite right in approving and recommending the cult of images: yours preaches to me the spirit of penance which you practised to so high a degree when you went through our country districts to obtain funds for the construction of the beautiful church of the Franciscan Sisters: *propter domum Domini Dei nostri quaesivi bona tibi* (I sought good things from you for the house of the Lord our God).

In 1915 the Golden Jubilee of Father Frederic's religious profession was commemorated. This celebration had a very special significance: it paid tribute to the veteran forerunner of the Franciscans in Canada who had done so much for his Order and for the Church. "The jubilee was celebrated here in the community," he wrote to Father Raphael. "I wanted to postpone it on account of the horrors of the war; but they refused to do so. The precious Apostolic Blessing arrived just one hour before the ceremony. It was His Excellency the Bishop who read it to me. God be blessed!"

The celebration consisted of a Solemn Mass with the special rites of the Order for Golden Jubilees and a modest banquet. At the High Mass Father Duguay gave the formal speech. In a voice that often broke with emotion, he outlined the fruitful career of Father Frederic. It was like Jonathan praising David.

As was fitting, the celebration closed at the feet of Our Lady of the Cape, whose prophet and herald the Friar had been.

Father Frederic's inseparable friend, Father Augustin, also shared in this Golden Jubilee. At the suggestion of their superiors, both old men visited the friaries in Montreal and Quebec, which in turn paid honor to the jubilarian. Together they went on to St. Anne de Beaupré to make the same pilgrimage which they had often made with crowds of the faithful. People said that they were on their honeymoon!

Chapter 20

A ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI OF THE 20TH CENTURY

Father Frederic's character has been delineated by the deeds and activities which we have already recorded. Nevertheless we shall now endeavor to sum up his personality.

His Cause of Beatification and Canonization extends far beyond the Franciscan Order. It is of diocesan, national, and international significance. The reputation of some Servants of God is limited to the country of their birth. Elsewhere they remain almost entirely unknown. This is not the case with Father Frederic. Like the Patriarch Abraham, he moved his tent from one place to another to make the name of God known. These travels were part of the design of Divine Providence.

Like his spiritual Father, St. Francis of Assisi, whom he perfectly imitated, Father Frederic Janssoone of Ghyvelde was a *catholic* man in the original sense of the word, that is, a man whose profound faith was *universal*, radiating over four continents: Europe, Asia, Africa, and North America. He belongs to his native France — to Palestine, the country in which he volunteered to serve — to Egypt, a land where he labored for a while and that was especially dear to his models, the Fathers of the Desert — and finally to Canada, his adoptive country which keeps his last remains. Furthermore, he preached on several occasions to the French Canadians in New England. He was truly an apostle of two worlds — the Old as well as the New.

Let us adopt the approach which he describes in his life of St. Francis of Assisi: "It is very interesting to know in some detail the features and natural qualities of the saints whom we love and admire.... Knowing their appearance and faithful image gives a special interest to our contemplation of their holy life and our meditating on their virtues."

Most persons living today who knew Father Frederic saw him only in his old age. They recall his appearance: a man of average height, with an emaciated and strongly lined face. The flesh over his cheek-bones was rose-colored, almost reddish, like that of old men who do not have much blood in their veins — at the least stimulus of emotion it floods into their face. His crown of white hair was quite striking, while his short white beard (which he retained as a Holy land missionary) framed his sensitive, austere, and lively features. A beautiful smile often radiated over his calm, modest, and recollected expression. His bright, intelligent, blue eyes held one's attention and created a bond of sympathy. In a word, his impressive face was so constantly animated by emotion that it defied artists, even photographers, and still more writers. People who knew him liked to think of him as another St. Francis of Assisi.

He had a penetrating voice. Its tone was not unpleasant, somewhat familiar and easily took on the lilt of someone who is about to tell a story to children. His voice lacked suppleness in chanting. One day he admitted that he had never learned more than one *Ite, missa est* and had always managed to get along with that one melody. As Vicar Custodial or Commissary of the Holy Land he had usually had to sing only Solemn High Masses.

He put all his soul into his singing. His strong and sonorous voice stressed each syllable.

Gifted with a natural, even a scientific curiosity, his mind took an interest in all fields of knowledge and especially in history and religious subjects. His judgment was deliberate and true.

His positive trend of mind was evident in his taste for precise details and exact measurements of places.

His alert intellect made him a good observer of events and persons. He knew how to size people up unobtrusively.

He was a joyful friar. He enjoyed conversation and jokes, and he willingly expressed his ideas. As soon as he appeared, the Franciscan novices or clerics gathered around him. The spiritual conversations which he liked to have with them were not in his judgment offenses against silence. The saying goes that silence is golden but words are only silver. In such circumstances, he believed in transposing those terms.

Father Mathieu M. Daunais has stated that this frail-looking ascetic sometimes worked for fourteen hours at a stretch without apparent fatigue. During the day he exercised his priestly ministry, yet he devoted a large part of the night to writing his letters, articles, or books.

He used to claim that he was timid. He was indeed modest, but he proved himself to be a great man of action. His personality was exuberant and dynamic. He was always interested in some apostolic or social project. Without seeming to be so or having such a reputation, he was essentially a very practical man. As a true Fleming, he pursued his goal with care and tenacity. His iron will lay concealed beneath his unchanging gentleness.

His exceptionally good memory amazed those who knew him. A witness declared:

This missionary of the meekness of Christ was gifted with the memory of a guardian angel and did not forget either the place or the date of a meeting or the family of the child or its age. To one who met him five or more years later Good Father Frederic did not fail to ask — calling the older child by his name — about his little sister Marinette who had had the measles when he visited their home or about other familiar details which showed his kind-hearted interest in one of our Catholic families.¹

We already know how sensitive he was, how he would sometimes weep while preaching or reading in public. Often

he had to practise heroic restraint to master this extreme sensitivity.

I asked several friars who had lived with Father Frederic: "Did you notice any faults in him?"

They replied more or less like the one who said:

"He could have had some, and no doubt he did have some. However, I cannot find in my memory anything that would have disedified me. In statements which I heard about him, in the criticism of some religious, I could note only the facility which Father Frederic had in weeping while preaching, a facility which the friars did not always understand." ²

This son of Flanders therefore had one of those privileged natures that present a particularly favorable soil for the cultivation of grace.

However, it was not Father Frederic's human qualities that made the deepest impression, but rather it was his saintliness.

Father Ignace of Alsace who lived in close contact with him in Trois Rivières has stated:

He was neither a great scholar nor a brilliant writer nor a powerful orator. Nevertheless he exerted an irresistible influence on crowds and achieved spectacular successes that can only be explained by the lofty opinion which people had of his personal holiness, the austerity of his life, his inexhaustible kindness, and that flame of divine love which burned within him and transfigured him... As an edified witness of his daily life, I was able to observe at close quarters how his reputation was justified and what an extraordinary prestige this man of God enjoyed in the eyes of our good French Canadian people. He was usually called "good Father Frederic" or "the holy Father." While he was still alive, legends were woven about him, and he seemed to be one of the great saints of the Middle Ages who had come down from a stained-glass window in a cathedral. Public opinion did not hesitate to attribute the most astonishing miracles to him. How many times, for instance, I heard people say that he miraculously walked on the St. Lawrence River near Trois Rivières, and that in another incident three bullets from a Browning revolver which

were fired at him at close range struck his chest and dropped to the ground, flattened, without even scratching him, while he was holding out his arms in the form of a cross before his assailant! "We could write a thick volume about the miracles that are attributed to him," declares the author of *L'apostolat du Père Frédéric*.³

In order to sketch in a few words the main features of Father Frederic's saintliness, I would say that he was a true apostle who succeeded in harmonizing his strong attraction for the contemplative life with the requirements of an active life that was both calm and overflowing.

He was of medium height. His bearing was always that of a courteous religious. His frail complexion was animated by his ardent soul. Everything about him reminded one of the essential features of the Seraph of Assisi: his smiling affability and his exquisite simplicity, his spirit of poverty which he cultivated to the most complete detachment and the most profound humility, his generosity that was expressed in his mortification, which was often heroic and which had its source in a burning love for Jesus Crucified, and finally the extraordinary fervor of his cult for the Eucharist and the very filial devotion which he had for Mary Immaculate.⁴

The learned Father Ignace of Alsace had a profound insight into the interior life of the Servant of God and has disclosed the principal elements in his saintliness. Other persons, on the contrary, were too sharply struck by certain exterior acts which they interpreted in their own way. They passed various (even malevolent) judgments on Father Frederic's preoccupation with edifying people, on his very austere mortification, his spirit of poverty, or his simplicity; and they thereby imagined that they had discovered the source of his so-called "saintliness."

This biography does not intend to be eulogistic, but to present a picture of its subject that is as objective as possible, letting facts and quotations speak for themselves, with fitting explanations when necessary. The light of history will take care of the halo. Let us try to dissipate some misunderstandings and to outline the spiritual characteristics of Father Frederic. He was first and foremost an apostle. *He succeeded in*

achieving a harmonious union of the contemplative and the active life, following the example of St. Francis. The great motive that animated him, as it did his spiritual father, was *zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.* All the various apostolic projects which he undertook were directed, as by remote control radio, by this zeal for God and for souls.

In the Church and in the Franciscan Order he practised the apostolate of preaching, writing, hearing confessions, praying, giving a good example, and laboring for the Holy Land, for pilgrimage shrines, and for charity projects.

In order to attain to Christ and His Blessed Mother, Father Frederic had chosen St. Francis of Assisi as his guide and model. He was so faithful in reproducing the Poverello's spirit that even his physical features reminded people of the Seraph of Assisi. He must have begun this deliberate imitation of his spiritual father in the novitiate in Amiens, under the influence of his teacher of Franciscan spirituality, Father Léon de Clary.

Father Frederic showed himself a true son of St. Francis in his favorite devotions — the Blessed Sacrament, the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Mary Immaculate, the Feast of the Portiuncula (or Our Lady of the Angels) — and by his special love for the Gospels and the Holy Land, and finally by his work in spreading the Third Order of St. Francis.

Good Father Frederic was a perfect follower of his Seraphic Father in his practice of the great Christian and religious virtues.

In his writings, letters, and books, he often mentions the main twofold motive that guided him: the glory of God and the good of souls. One day, in reply to a newspaper article, he outlined the rules which he followed in his apostolic work:

Mr. Editor, the motto of us poor religious must in all truth be the one which you stated in your article: **all for the greater glory of God.** And all our conduct must bear the imprint of this fourfold mark: 1) to remain as calm in the failure as in the success of an

undertaking, since God looks only to the intention, and success adds nothing to our merit; 2) to rejoice as much over what others achieve as if we did it ourselves; 3) to have no preference for any position or work; 4) to remain unmoved when criticized as when praised, having always before our eyes this simple and sublime saying of St. Francis: "I am in reality only what I am in God's sight!"⁵

Those who lived in intimate contact with Father Frederic quickly grasped the incentives of his soul. "What is most striking in him," wrote Father Luc Desilets on January 3, 1882, "is his flaming zeal for the salvation of souls and the glory of God: he does not think of anything else." This means that in actual practice this apostle reduced everything to the *love of God* and to its divine corollary, *fraternal charity*. That unity of motivation was the great law of his life. In this connection we might quote Victor Hugo's lines: "With a single virtue God makes the heart of the just, as with a single sapphire He makes the dome of the sky." Though somewhat contrived, that verse nevertheless contains a profound truth. Charity, which is the absolute rule of life and unity and fulfilment in the divine order, includes all virtues, just as the skies cover all the just, because it is itself the law of the universe and hence the law of predestined souls.

Prayer, "the soul of the apostolate," had a special attraction for Father Frederic. He knew no other pleasure in his life than prayer, spiritual reading, and good deeds, and no other attraction than the will of God. He let his whole life be ruled by the presence of God as by a mystic sun that transcends the universe and yet filters into the heart of man. This Holy Land missionary loved to pray. Monsignor Duguay, the former pastor at Cap de la Madeleine, told Father Mathieu M. Daunais, O.F.M., about his fervor: "One night I noticed that Father Frederic was not in his room. I began to look for him. Finally, at about three o'clock in the morning I found him in the dark Old Shrine, at the foot of the altar." How many times he must have watched thus and prayed at night! And during the unforgettable religious celebrations, he practised

that "consummate skill in making people pray" which Cardinal Rodrigue Villeneuve, O.M.I., once mentioned when recalling a pilgrimage that he had made as a young boy to the Shrine of Our Lady of the Cape under Father Frederic's leadership. We may also mention the Christmas-season nights which he spent with Holy Land pilgrims in the Grotto of Bethlehem or other nights on the steamer with pilgrims to Sainte Anne de Beaupré or the Portiuncula Feast Days which he spent in prayer.

To his principal personal devotions which the Church advocated, he constantly added apostolic action. He always strove for harmony between the contemplative and the active life. Thus his devotion to the Blessed Sacrament found external expression in his work for the Perpetual Adoration Shrine of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary in Quebec and by his faithful literary contributions to the *Revue eucharistique*.

His devotion to the Passion of Our Lord was nourished by his service as one of the guardians of the Holy Sepulcher and was spread by his preaching of the Way of the Cross, particularly in the streets of Jerusalem, and by the erection of splendid outdoor Ways of the Cross in Canada.

His fervent love for the Mother of God was manifested above all in spreading the devotions to Our Lady of Calvary and Our Lady of the Holy Rosary, by directing pilgrimages to Our Lady of the Cape, and by the publication of Marian books and the *Annales* of the Rosary Shrine.

We should also mention his devotion to St. Joseph, St. Ann, St. Francis of Assisi, and St. Anthony of Padua, which he propagated by sermons, books, and pilgrimages.

Without aiming at extraordinary undertakings nor at striking virtues, he eagerly and joyfully seized the opportunity of performing some deed of extraordinary or even heroic virtue, whenever the occasion arose. However, at all times he strove to put a great degree of virtue into ordinary acts and to sanctify every action in his daily life.

With both feet firmly planted on the ground, yet with his face looking up toward the source of all light, he lived his active and his interior life so well that neither of them suffered.

His zeal, his special vocation, and his overflowing abundance of apostolic plans were not always understood. Some people who had only a passing acquaintance with him and even some of his brethren willingly classified him as an impractical dreamer. As evidence we have a letter from Father Jean Baptiste Pelte, O.F.M., first guardian of the friary in Montreal, to the Very Reverend Father Raphael Delarbre: "I went to see dear Father Frederic in Trois Rivières, and since then he came to spend several days in Montreal. He is truly a man of God, in spite of what is and seems strange in him. He gave me some very good advice, and I admit that it is very helpful to gain as much light as possible."⁶ And as special evidence here is the report of another friar, the "saintly" Father Arsène Marie Beix, to the Minister General:

I am perhaps being severe, but I am sure that I am saying nothing against the truth or beyond the truth. Father Frederic really is a saintly man in his way, but one who utterly lacks judgment and who lets himself be ruled by his imagination. He cannot live quietly for a fortnight without planning new projects. Let him stay where he is and as he is. I would especially want him to be under the jurisdiction of the Guardian in Montreal as to directing the Third Order, and that he should not have the right to visit it without being sent by him. For he arranges things in his own way, now this way, now that way. But I have said enough on this subject. Please forgive me if I have been overlong. That is the situation.⁷

It is only natural that feelings are aroused and premature judgments are passed when conflicts of jurisdiction and interest are involved.

But how could Father Frederic have succeeded in so many bold undertakings if he had been such an impractical dreamer? As a matter of fact, although he was a contemplative and always wished to remain one, if necessary he could accomplish

wonders in temporal matters, in which he played a foremost role. Though he was a true mystic, he had that sixth sense for the vitality of a project, that practical approach, and that intuition for simplifying problems which great men of action possess. The numerous projects which he conducted to a successful completion definitely prove this. With the weak means that he had at his disposal, he obtained results which we still find amazing. Let us recall his acts of spiritual and corporal mercy, his collection of funds for religious communities, and his part in founding shrines which are thriving today. Such was the apostolic work which he undertook for the glory of God and for the love of his neighbor.

His charity toward others made his heart respond to their needs, sometimes in a charming way.

At the end of the school year in 1916, Good Father Frederic decided to accompany the boys of the Franciscan High School on their annual picnic. Leaving the infirmary where he had spent several days, he said to them: "I'm going with you." He knew that they liked to have him along, for their affection was mutual.

The group went to a maple forest near Sainte Angèle, across the river from Trois Rivières. While the boys played ball, Father Archange Godbout, O.F.M., set about preparing the lunch with several assistants. They were going to eat pancakes. But the master-cook quickly noticed that the supply of flour and lard which they had brought was not enough for half of the boys, whose appetite was sharpened by their games, the fresh air and the atmosphere of a picnic. The Father explained his plight to Father Frederic, who reassured him, saying that he would have enough. The pancakes were made in piles, and everyone had all he wanted. This was called "a miracle" of Father Frederic. It recalled Elias multiplying the flour and oil of the widow Sarepta.

His many-sided charity was especially manifested toward the sick and victims of disasters.

When he was in Trois Rivières, people often came to have him visit sick persons in different parishes in the area. He was always ready to bring them the consolations of his ministry. He did not hesitate to make trips by train or to cross the river in order to practise this form of charity. In certain circumstances his virtue was heroic.

A dying man resisted the strong urging of his family to see a priest. Finally, when hard pressed, he said: "If I confess, it will only be to Father Frederic." These words were reported to the pastor. With enlightened and disinterested zeal Canon Edouard Laflèche, pastor of Saint Paulin, immediately telephoned to Trois Rivières. The parish was ten miles away, including four miles that had to be traveled in a wagon on a muddy and almost impassible road. A light cold rain was coming down without stopping. No matter — there was some good to be done, a stray lamb to be brought back to God's flock from a great distance. Father Frederic left without delay. He found the dying man terrified at the prospect of eternity. The two had a long talk. After receiving the sacraments of Penance and Extreme Unction, the sick man regained serenity, hope, and the love of God. He offered up the sacrifice of his life in reparation for the past, authorized the friar to ask the parish to forgive him for the scandal which he had caused, and died in the peace of the Lord.

The daughter of Monsieur Adolphe Rho expressed the desire to see Father Frederic before she died. On the afternoon of March 15, 1893, the painter went to the rectory at the Cape to fetch the missionary and accompany him to the bedside of the sick woman in Bécancour on the south bank of the St. Lawrence River, opposite the Cape. They crossed the water on the ice at a spot where the river is a mile and a half wide.

At nine-thirty in the evening, Monsieur Rho's seventeen-year-old son Zotique drove the priest back the same way. The moon was shining brightly as the horse set out over the ice. It had gone about a mile when it stopped suddenly and refused

to advance. The two travelers wondered why and got down from the sleigh. The Friar's feet were shod in white socks and sandals.

"Look at that stretch of water fifteen feet away!" said the young man. "Now I understand why the horse stopped suddenly. The current is detaching and carrying away pieces of ice in the middle of the river."

"How is that?" the Friar answered thoughtfully. "For we came across this afternoon."

"The open water developed during the evening. I will drive you to the ferry to Trois Rivières."

"No. Go home," the priest ordered in a firm tone of voice.

Obeying unwillingly, the young man got back in his sleigh and drove off. But from time to time he kept anxiously looking back. In the moonlight he could see a little man walking on the ice. He lost sight of him when he reached the road along the river bank. On arriving home he told his family about the strange incident.

Later he learned from Father Duguay that Father Frederic had traveled faster than he had: the friar had reached the Cape before he had arrived at his home in Bécancour.

When Father Duguay saw Father Frederic come in, he said: "Tell the driver to put his horse in the stable. He can go home tomorrow."

"There is no horse and no driver."

"How did you come?"

"I came across the ice."

"But it has begun to break up."

"Yes. And I don't know how I got here. I recommended myself to the Blessed Virgin, and here I am!"

If he did not walk around the stretch of water that lay before him when he got out of the sleigh, no one knows how

he crossed to the opposite bank. This incident always remained a mystery. Public opinion expressed the people's admiration for him by claiming that he walked on the water. He was never formally questioned about this matter. To those who asked him how he had escaped, he answered in generalities: "The good Lord performs far greater things than that." As a matter of fact, in such circumstances, he could not deny the miraculous protection of the Blessed Virgin. His humility and modesty did not allow him to state it publicly without an adequate reason, for that would have increased his own reputation for sanctity. Those who questioned him were not officially authorized to do so.⁸

Before helping the victims of an immense landslide which occurred on April 27, 1891, at Saint Alban de Portneuf, Father Frederic had assisted victims of another disaster in 1891.

In that year he accompanied Bishop Laflèche as preacher in his episcopal visitation. On Sunday, June 1, they were both in the beautiful parish of Saint Tite. After supper, at about seven p.m., a very excited parishioner arrived at the rectory and asked Father Frederic to come to the fire. Due to a long drought during the spring, fire was sweeping through the woods in the north. A frightful fire was now raging in an area eight to ten miles from the village, where Hérouxville is now located.

The wagon in which the friar had to ride was partly broken. Despite this fact and the terrible bumps in the road, the horse made the trip at a rapid pace in one hour. The jolts and bumps were so large and frequent that some simple people imagined that Father Frederic had hardly sat on the seat and "had, so to speak, traveled in the air to the site of the disaster." A terrible fire was blazing throughout the section. It was eight o'clock in the evening. The wind had gone down. On the edge of the section, the children had recited the rosary, while the men protected the homes. Everything was saved, as by a real miracle! The Friar was able to go from one end of the section to the other despite the heat of the fire. He

witnessed heart-rending scenes. All those poor people were exhausted and in a state of shock, almost out of their minds. A mother of eight children was standing in the road, sobbing. She had lost all she had, and was insane with grief. Father Frederic gave her his blessing and expressed the hope that she would recover her sanity when she returned to her farm. And in fact when she went back, she was calm and resigned, with confidence in Divine Providence for the future. At another place a man was standing alone near a poor round wooden house. There was an expression of radiant triumph on his features. The friar immediately grasped that he was temporarily beside himself.

"My friend," he said to him, "the Blessed Virgin has performed a miracle for you. The fire is burning all around you, but your little house is not on fire."

"Oh, but Father, I have been working hard! I've emptied two wells — there is not a drop of water left. But the fire is out too!"

Actually the fire was still burning nearby, but in his emotional state the poor man was not aware of it.

Father Frederic had with him some holy water, in which he had great confidence. He sprinkled it wherever he went. When he returned from the far end of the section, it was dark. The fire had gone down, and in some places it was entirely extinguished.

When he had arrived, three houses and two barns were burning, but after that moment no other building caught fire. The whole section had been put under the protection of Our Lady of the Rosary.

The next day the people filled the church to begin a tridium of fervent prayers for the end of the fire in the surrounding forests. Three days later, a gentle but strong rain began to fall, and it was followed by still other helpful rainfalls. The faithful attributed the rich harvest, which had

been threatened by the drought, to their praying the beads and to their devotion to Our Lady of the Rosary.

In this account, which was published at length in the *Annales* of Our Lady of the Cape,⁹ we can only wonder which is the most to be admired: the influence and selflessness of Father Frederic, the confidence of the people, or the power of prayer.

It is difficult to determine which of the religious virtues that characterized Father Frederic's apostolate was the dominant one: his desire to edify others, his regularity as a religious, his mortification, simplicity, humility, obedience, kindness, or loveliness.

He was constantly preoccupied with the desire to edify his neighbor either by his actions or by his writings. This attitude, which was also shared by other older friars, no doubt came from their training in the novitiate at Amiens in the Spanish spirituality of the restorers of the Franciscan Order in France. The spirituality of religious orders during the last century and at the beginning of this century stressed exterior behavior, such as the modest and recollected bearing of a friar, with lowered eyes and hands in his sleeves. Besides, St. Francis, following Our Lord and St. Paul, considered the apostolate of good example as a primary obligation which he constantly recalled to his disciples. He used to say that "the friars should live among people in such a way that on hearing or seeing them, people would glorify their Father in Heaven and praise their devotion" (*The Three Companions*). The following anecdote which is told of him typifies his attitude, although scholars have established that none of the early documents mention it: he is said to have walked with a companion all through the town of Assisi, one going before the other, with hands in their sleeves and their cowls over their heads, without saying a word — and St. Francis is said to have told his companion that they had thus preached a fine sermon.

This solicitude to edify was not exalted by Father Frederic to the level of a primary principle of spirituality, but remained

subordinated to the supreme rule of zeal for the glory of God and the good of souls.

Some friars who were not fully aware of his motives received an unfavorable impression of some of his actions. Brother Dominic Thompson accompanied him on a pilgrimage on foot from Quebec City to Sainte Anne de Beaupré. On arriving Father Frederic wished to have a little rest before preaching the Way of the Cross. In order to continue his penance, instead of retiring to rest in the pilgrims' hospice, he led his companion to a side chapel and they took a short nap there, kneeling on a bench and leaning their heads on their arms on the priedieu in an attitude of prayer, without disedifying anyone. On their return the lay brother told the story and laughed at the old missionary's simplicity. But Father Frederic had acted without the least pretention, with charming guilelessness, as in many similar circumstances.¹⁰

Whenever he left the Commissariat in Trois Rivières to spend a few days at the friary in Montreal, he followed all the community exercises, including the midnight office. One day, in a retreat talk which he gave to his brethren, he admitted how painful this getting up during the night was for him. "I have never been able to get used to it," he said. Nevertheless he edified all the friars by his regularity.

Those who lived with him in the friary in Trois Rivières during the last years of his life recall his extraordinary punctuality. When they saw him go by, they would say: "The bell for the office is going to ring. Father Frederic is going to choir." He was a human clock. He was the first in choir, even for matins at night, so regularly that some friars thought he had not taken any rest. He kept up that habit until his last illness.

Lay people who saw him kneeling before the Blessed Sacrament or walking through town or country admired his recollected bearing. They were convinced that he really walked and talked with God.

Some persons try to edify others and do not succeed. Father Frederic succeeded. For edification does not follow from just one act or even from several, but from an entire life. This Friar could have adopted as his own a motto of Ozanam that he liked so much: "Not to make others see us, but to let them see us." And that is an echo of the Gospel saying: "Let your light shine before men so that, seeing your good works, they may glorify your Father who is in heaven."

Was mortification Father Frederic's dominant virtue? At least it is the one which made the greatest impression on his contemporaries and which is the sharpest contradiction of our love of modern comfort. This servant of God takes his place among the greatest penitents of our times. We cannot help admiring in him one of the finest examples of Christian moral strength. Few saints have pushed mortification in eating and sleeping as far as he did.

His mortification at meals seemed to pass unnoticed if the others present had not been told about it. It was hidden by his humility. Father Frederic took only a potato and a little bread, but he kept so busy with them throughout the meal that it often seemed as if he had eaten as much as the others.

However, he did not seek to impose his way of life on others. Once he preached a mission with a frail colleague to some French Canadian nuns in the United States. After each talk a sister brought some fruit and a refreshing drink to the preachers. Father Frederic excused himself for not taking what was offered.

"The other Father takes it," insisted the nun, pointing to the companion.

"That Father needs it," replied Father Frederic. "I don't need it. Thank you."

If someone expressed admiration for his severe mortification and surprise at the small amount of food that he took, he answered: "The saints practised far greater mortifications.

My stomach is accommodating. It is satisfied with very little."

Actually, he fasted all the time. Going beyond the abstinences and fasts prescribed by the Church and the Franciscan Rule, he practised Christian mortification in all its holy rigor, which owes less to a penalty for sin than to the desire to resemble Jesus Christ, the divine exemplar. In this world there is no love of God without sacrifice. All Christian perfection lies in a love of God pushed to the immolation of oneself.

Father Frederic mortified himself in order to obtain from God the graces of conversion for sinners, the graces for which people asked him to pray, or the blessings of heaven on one of his apostolic projects.

Remaining faithful to the spiritual talks of his mother, the child of Ghyselde became a twentieth-century Father of the Desert or rather a true son of the Stigmatized Saint of Mount Alverna. His soul was certainly nourished by the example and the spirituality of the hermits who lived in the deserts of the Thebaid in Egypt. His private notebooks contain many pages about them which he copied from Migne's *Patrologia Latina*. If anyone should reproach him for that spiritual influence, we would remind them of this relevant passage in the introduction of Henri Brémond's two-volume work, *Les Pères du Désert*, 3rd ed. (Paris, 1927, p. XXXV): "The great spiritual figures of all times have undergone the influence of the Fathers of the Desert..... You can be sure that those who scorn our Fathers or who merely speak of them without sympathy lack something: the former lack the Catholic instinct, while the second lack understanding."

The penitential practices of our missionary, which were often more admirable than imitable, can hardly be explained without assuming a special help from Providence. Here is an example. In 1909 he undertook to walk from Québec City to Sainte Anne de Beaupré, a distance of twenty miles. On arriving at the Shrine, he saw that the train by which his

Superior had told him to return was at the station. So great was his religious reverence for the virtue of obedience that he preferred to leave immediately, without even visiting the beloved Shrine, rather than to take the next train. However, he intended to repeat this promised pilgrimage at the next opportunity. The following day he had to preach at Montmorency nine miles from Quebec. He went and came back on foot. On the third day he walked back to Sainte Anne de Beaupré. Thus in three days this seventy-year old Friar set the amazing record of walking sixty miles.¹¹

Although his mortification was evident, the most typical virtue of this great apostle was rather his charity, which assumed the form of a lovable kindness. It was written of him after he died:

Kindness, an inexhaustible kindness, consisting of simplicity and humility, ever affable and smiling, was the characteristic quality of this religious and Franciscan soul.

The universal popularity that he aroused everywhere, the invincible attraction that he had on hearts, the deep and faithful affection that many souls had for him, cannot be otherwise explained: Father Frederic was kind... He possessed to a high degree that universal charity which attracts souls and opens and dilates hearts. It radiated from his whole personality: his blue eyes, that were sparkling, profound, and very expressive, his gentle voice that was fresh and somewhat lilting like his ever young heart, his simple and thoughtful manners, his exquisite courtesy in look, gesture, and attitude which he never abandoned — all this gave his whole appearance an expression of kindly, likable, and receptive gentleness which inspired confidence, put one at his ease, created mutual sympathy, induced one to open one's heart and even to disclose the most painful secrets.¹²

Perseverance is the crown of all virtues. It is the only one that guarantees achieving the goal, for in all things it is only the end that counts. St. Catherine of Siena used to say that it is the only virtue with which we enter heaven. Someone who knew him intimately admitted:

The most extraordinary thing which I admired most in Father Frederic, the one which in my humble opinion gives the true mark

of his sanctity, is less his way of life, extraordinary though it was, than his indefectible perseverance in maintaining it throughout his long life. I lived in Canada for twenty years. I was often in his company. But I never observed the slightest relaxation of his will... He always kept himself at the same level, without any of those moods of fervor or lukewarmness which are always a sign of an unsteady will that is not sufficiently master of itself.¹³

Sanctity consists in the practice of all the virtues and not in a few extraordinary gifts. Nevertheless Father Frederic seems to have been favored with the charismatic gifts of miracles, prophecy, and reading hearts. Some persons have also reported that he had several terrifying apparitions of the devil.

This Friar's personality, like that of his spiritual Father, unites several contrasts: a strong soul in a frail constitution, an unbreakable will hidden beneath an unalterable gentleness, an invincible energy together with an inexhaustible kindness, and an exemplary modesty with an amazing boldness.

When Father Frederic once wrote a sketch of St. Francis of Assisi, he unconsciously outlined his own portrait. That synthesis of his personality traits forms a fitting conclusion to this chapter:

That blessed Father pleased everyone. Joy, serenity, kindness, and modesty always radiated from his face. By nature he was gentle and polite, compassionate, kind, generous, prudent, discreet, wise, faithful to his word, and full of energy. His character was pliable and adaptable, yielding to the moods of others, being all things to all men, holy with the holy and so humble with poor sinners that he himself seemed to be a sinner. In his conversation he spoke graciously. He was perceptive and fluent in speech, active and accommodating in dealing with others, and yet very simple in his words and deeds.

When he preached, he scorned all the affectations of oratory, considering them unworthy of an envoy of Jesus Christ. Nevertheless he spoke with inspiring eloquence, great wit, good judgment, and vividness. He had an excellent memory. His voice was vibrant, sonorous, and pleasing. His words were simple, natural, and persuasive. He preached with all the fervor and fire that are

enkindled by a loving heart, a profound faith, and an all-inclusive sensitive charity. A divine power continually sustained the man of God and penetrated into the hearts and minds of others. Whenever he appeared anywhere, crowds thronged to see and hear this new man sent by God. He sowed miracles wherever he went, healing the sick, driving out devils, and foretelling the future.¹⁴

Chapter 21

"COME, LORD JESUS !"

In the summer of 1916, Father Frederic began his seventy-eighth year. For many years he had been suffering from the illness that was to cause his death. In his letters he often mentioned stomach aches and intestinal pains.

On April 7, 1889, he wrote to the Very Rev. Father Raphael Delarbre:

I venture to suggest once more that it would be wise to select a friar to take my place. I always have a presentiment of dying suddenly. I tell everyone that my health is good in order to avoid unnecessary attention. But actually I suffer continuously night and day. My stomach hardly accepts any more food. Yet I cannot say that I am sick, and paradoxically, I always feel better at the end of a major mission than at the beginning. Rest is bad for me, so I hardly take any — what a paradox!

A few years later he still complained about his stomach, "strong intestinal pains," "seriously undermined health." He wrote on September 14, 1898, to the Father Guardian in Montreal:

An intense and sudden stomach trouble Monday morning at Saint Victor (Beauce) obliged me to return to Quebec City yesterday. I am feeling better, and I think I can resume my missions on Saturday. We believe it is the unexpected cold wave that gripped me. I was not dressed warmly enough. Poor human body, how much longer must I still endure its caprices?

In 1902 he wrote:

Everyone is complimenting me on my "exuberant health!" All by myself, in secret, I am suffering amazingly and without

interruption from inner pains that will soon, I hope, do away with me! However, may the holy will of God be done! ¹

It was not without a special assistance from God that this great apostle was able to achieve as much as he did with such a frail constitution and so little nourishment.

He was considered an exceptional being. In 1900 the Very Rev. Fr. Colomban Dreyer answered a request from Msgr. Marois, Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Quebec for a Franciscan priest for some diocesan project:

Really, after having thought the matter over and consulted the will of God, I cannot promise you more. I know that Father Frederic can do more and better than that [he was then collecting funds for the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary!]; but you know him. He is a unique kind of man, an immaterial being who needs neither physical nor mental rest, whereas we here feel the weakness of our constitutions. It would be a tragedy to kill off a Father by overwork. For that Father would not easily be replaced. ²

Although the Holy Land Commissary was working away like a man overflowing with health, as the years passed he realized more and more how exhausted he was. He urged his superiors to replace him: "I keep requesting that I may not be left to die in my official position. I would be intensely afraid to do so. As an ordinary religious, I could quietly prepare myself for death." ³

Each of his serious illnesses, in 1876, 1882, and 1884, had aroused in him the hope that he might be about to join God in Heaven. After those nearly fatal crises he had had several alarms, but each time a few days' rest had sufficed for him to resume his work. All these illnesses had only served to arouse in him, with a kind of regular insistence, that mystical complaint of St. Paul: "I feel myself attached to nothing here below, and I have only one irresistible desire — to be dissolved and to be with Christ." ⁴ Besides on several occasions he had offered his life for his adopted country, Canada.

He was feeling the weight of his years. His labors and watching and praying had worn him out. Now in 1914 the

First World War depressed him. He followed the destiny of his native France with anxiety. Discouraging news overwhelmed his sensitive soul.

His body was succumbing to the silent attacks of an inexorable illness. As yet he did not know its nature. But at certain hours he endured a real martyrdom. He suffered pain under the mask of such a silent resignation that nearly all of his brethren were not aware of it. Lay persons did not even suspect it. If he stated that his health was poor, they sometimes smiled at what they considered a pious exaggeration. In a word, his heroic resignation threw a veil over the suffering which he secretly endured for the love of God and the salvation of souls.

For a long time he was accustomed to go with the Tertiary ladies of Montreal on their annual pilgrimage to Sainte Anne de Beaupré. On June 9, 1916, he went to the big city for that purpose.

That evening he took the pilgrims' special train. He had to force himself to walk and seemed to drag himself along. During the journey he had a very intense crisis, which would have caused his death had it not been for the intervention of Dr. Eugène Virolle, who was among the pilgrims. "This is my last trip with you," he told them. "I feel that I am dying. I am all in." The devout tertiaries grieved because each year they counted on his inspiring presence to direct their prayers.

Nevertheless at Sainte Anne de Beaupré he presided at the usual procession on the grounds and the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament in the Basilica. Father Marcel Marie Dugal, O.F.M., was his assistant. During the procession the brave Commissary of the Holy Land joined the crowd in singing with all his heart — this was his swan song.

On his return to Montreal he underwent a medical examination. Dr. Virolle, the regular physician of the Franciscan motherhouse, was outstanding as a diagnostician. He perceived without difficulty that Father Frederic had a form of cancer, a

tumor in the stomach. He thought it advisable to inform the superiors that the patient's case was hopeless, due to his advanced age.

A one-day visit to Trois Rivières enabled the Commissary of the Holy Land to put his affairs in order. He wrote a hasty note: "The Commissariat of the Holy Land owes nothing to anyone. Everything has been settled."

Then he went back to Montreal to be treated. He had to take to bed on June 16, and was to stay in the infirmary of St. Joseph's Friary for fifty days. Brother Raphael Quinn, O.F.M., took care of him with fraternal charity.

The patient foresaw the end of his exile. The Lord was at last about to grant the prayer of the holy old Simeon which he had been repeating for some years to anyone willing to listen: "Let your servant depart in peace."

He had a right to expect the reward of a good and faithful servant from the just Judge. His biographer may be permitted to record his human judgment on this long life. He has good reason to believe that he has written about a holy religious, a holy priest, who successfully accomplished his providential mission. And we can be glad that his long career disproved all prognostications based on his frail constitution. The vitality of Father Frederic's achievements — and the principal ones live on today — demonstrate his ability to cooperate with the plans of God.

Nearly his entire life as a religious was devoted to the Holy Land: twelve years of service in the land of Christ as a fervent missionary, an able and zealous Vicar Custodial, and the rest of his life in Canada as an outstanding Commissary. He supervised the rebuilding of the Church of St. Catherine in Bethlehem. He compiled the important collections of regulations of the Basilicas of the Holy Sepulcher and Bethlehem. He stimulated French-Canadian interest in Palestine by establishing the first Commissariat of the Holy Land and the annual collection for the Holy Places, as well as by making

the land of Jesus and the Blessed Virgin better known and loved. He was the advance agent of the restoration of the Franciscan Order in Canada. The cities of Montreal, Quebec, and Trois Rivières once again, as during the French regime, had friaries, and their foundation was in large part due to his influence. Thanks to his zeal, the Poor Clares made a lasting foundation in Valleyfield. The Third Order of St. Francis has attained a phenomenally high membership in the Province of Quebec as a result of his promotion work. In 1881-1882 and for more than a quarter of a century after 1888 he aroused a renewal of religious fervor in French Canada. By the summer of 1916 the Queen of the Rosary was more widely venerated than ever in Catholic homes. The Shrine of Our Lady of the Cape and its pilgrimages had a firm foundation and were prospering under the wise administration of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, whom he had suggested as guardians to the Bishop of Trois Rivières. The Commissary had also worked for the foundation of other shrines: La Réparation in Montreal and Saint Elie de Caxton. And he had strongly encouraged Brother André, C.S.C., to develop the Oratory of St. Joseph on Mount Royal. By his writings he had given spiritual nourishment to a great number of souls. It would not be possible to count all the vocations to the priesthood or the religious life that he inspired or encouraged, or the number of sinners who owed to him their return to God.

Now after so many years of apostolic labors came fifty days spent on the cross. This son of the Stigmatic of Mount Alverna endured with heroic patience the suffering of his body: indescribable pains, frequent exhausting vomiting, sleepless nights, and a burning fever. To his visitors who wished him "a prompt recovery," he answered: "Do not ask for my cure. Let the good God do as He wishes."

With the meekness of a child he would accept all the drugs which his nurse gave him, without showing the least repugnance for medicines that were incapable of bringing him any relief. "You are my superior," he said to Brother

Raphael. "I will take whatever you give me, though I will pay for it tonight." These last words suggested that the so-called alleviation would cause a painful reaction during the night. His intestines were perforated. Consequently he suffered more than anything else from the nauseating odors that arose from his stomach.

But the sufferings of his body were nothing compared to those of his soul. The ultimate purification of all human dross was now taking place. To the very end, through periods of varying intensity, the "man of God" must needs be a martyr and confront the Enemy. Bit by bit shadows invaded his soul: exaggerated scruples of a timorous conscience, a feeling of his personal nothingness, bewilderment when facing eternity, and fears of God's judgment. "Have I been faithful to my vocation?" The tormenting trial of his novitiate returned with this question. It seemed to the sick man that his life had been nothing but a useless agitation, a continued abuse of graces. A despairing fright gripped him. The Prince of Darkness thought that his hour had come. At last he was about to inflict his vengeance on this apostle, this man of prayer and penance. He took advantage of the sick friar's extreme weakness and the intensity of his suffering by terrifying him with frightful visions. Father Frederic grasped his crucifix, pressed it to his heart and his lips, and kissed it tenderly, with that warmth of feeling that was noticeable when he prayed with fervor and intensity. Like the saintly Curé d'Ars, he experienced the attacks of the devil, who appeared to him in one form or another, but always in a threatening attitude.

"Do you see that large dog near my bed?" he said to Brother Raphael. "It wants to jump at me. It tells me: 'If you receive Holy Communion, I will make you vomit and profanate the Host!'"

One morning, out of fear, Father Frederic abstained from Communion. But the doctor, who was very devout, reassured him: "I am going to leave a serum for you. The Brother will

give you an injection a little while before Communion. I guarantee you will not vomit for half an hour."

Relying on this assurance, the patient continued to receive his Lord every day.

The diabolic trial lasted several days. Father Frederic wanted help to achieve victory in his last battle. Twice he called to his bedside his Provincial, the Very Rev. Jean Joseph Deguire, and begged him to use all his priestly authority and all the power of special liturgical prayers to drive away the enemy of his soul. He had also Father Anselm Fisher, the guardian of the friary, come for the same purpose.

Amid his struggles, God granted several consolations to His servant: first, divine graces through attending Holy Mass which was celebrated every morning in the chapel of the infirmary, and through receiving daily Communion. On July 22 Extreme Unction was administered to him by the Provincial in the presence of the members of the community. A year before, on the same day, the Feast of St. Mary Magdalen, when he had celebrated the Golden Jubilee of his religious profession, he had received ephemeral flowers. Now he was given the assurance of a crown of flowers that would never fade. The Provincial asked him whether he wanted to say anything, but he made a sign indicating that he was unable to speak. However, he followed the liturgical prayers attentively. His inflamed face, flushed with fever, retained its usual serenity. After being anointed with the holy oils, he folded his hands, lowered his eyes, and was absorbed in a profound recollection, as he meditated on the new graces which God had just given him. He found intense joy in these Last Sacraments and wanted to remain united in solitary intimacy with Our Lord and stay with Him on the Cross.

God also arranged some human consolations for His servant. He was visited by his closest friends: Brother André of St. Joseph's Oratory, whom he had asked to see once more; Senator Hippolyte Montplaisir, an outstanding benefactor of the Shrine at Cap de la Madeleine; Monsieur Gédéon Desilets,

the apostolic trustee of the Holy Land Commissariat; and his faithful friend Father Louis Eugène Duguay. Archbishop Paul Bruchesi of Montreal came twice to see the venerable patient. He chatted a while with him, recalling memories and recommending several special intentions to him, and after having recited some prayers, he blessed him and let him kiss his pectoral cross. Father Frederic was very pleased by these two visits. During the second, which took place on August 2, he was so ill that he could only murmur these words: "How kind of Your Excellency! I do not deserve such kindness."

But the deepest consolation that Father Frederic received was the company of his oldest and closest friend, Good Father Augustin, who arrived at his bedside on July 12.

"Welcome, dear Father Augustin!" he said. "Come — let me embrace you. May the Good God reward you for the trouble you have taken to console a dying old man who wanted to see you very much before closing his eyes forever."

The two saintly oldsters exchanged a brotherly embrace and had long talks about the Kingdom of God and the blessings that had accompanied their ministry in France, Palestine, and Canada. It was a *Magnificat* that their souls intoned to the glory of Almighty God.

Until the very end, Father Augustin was Father Frederic's consoling angel of Gethsemani in his last battles. He spared no effort to comfort the beloved patient. Frequently he read some prayers or excerpts from a religious book. Above all he celebrated Holy Mass every morning in the infirmary chapel. The patient could follow the Mass from his nearby cell, and he received Holy Communion daily, except for one day when he abstained for fear of committing an irreverence. He did not want his mind to be blank at the moment of death, so he begged Father Augustin to repeat to him during the last minutes the words of the Beloved Disciple: "*Veni, Domine Jesu*" ("Come, Lord Jesus." Apoc. 22:20). "Say it loud enough so I will understand," he insisted.

He was anointed at four o'clock on the afternoon of August first.

At four o'clock in the morning of August fourth, the Feast of St. Dominic, the first apostle of the Rosary, the end seemed to be close. The prayers for the dying were recited. At about 4 p.m., Father Frederic entered on a peaceful last agony. The friary bell hastily summoned the community to gather around his bedside. A supernatural atmosphere seemed to fill the modest cell. Everyone was afraid of troubling the last unloosing of a soul that was leaving this world to dwell in the mansion of Almighty God. The Provincial recited the prayers and invocations, and the friars gave the responses. Father Augustin sprinkled the bed with holy water. When he saw that the end was at hand, he went close to his dear companion to give him a last absolution, and fulfilling his request he repeated in the dying priest's ear: "*Veni, Domine Jesu.... Veni, Domine Jesu...*"

It was with those last words of the Bible that the book of Father Frederic's life came to an end. That aspiration directed to Heaven summed up his entire life and filled his burning apostle's heart. In a last outpouring of his soul, his face became radiant. And with his eyes gazing at the crucifix hanging on the wall opposite him, he passed from the peace of his cell to the joy of Paradise — *de cella ad coelum* (from cell to Heaven), as the monks of the Middle Ages liked to say. It was Friday, August 4, 1916, at a quarter-to-five in the afternoon. The beloved deceased was in his seventy-eighth year, his fifty-second as a religious, and his twenty-eighth as Commissary of the Holy Land. He had spent nearly twenty-nine years in Canada — the longest and by far the most fruitful period of his religious life.⁵

After being embalmed, his body lay in state, in all Franciscan simplicity, in the large parlor of St. Joseph's Friary in Montreal. As long as the doors stayed open, the faithful came to pray beside him whom they venerated as a saint.

A first Solemn Mass was held at nine o'clock the next day in the Franciscan Chapel on Dorchester Street. It was chanted by the Very Reverend Provincial Jean Joseph Deguire, assisted by Father Hyacinth Workman as deacon and Father Elphège Joseph Morin as subdeacon. Auxiliary Bishop Gauthier of Montreal, attended by many members of the clergy, honored the ceremony with his presence. In the nave were representatives of most of the religious communities in the city of Montreal.

Then came the last journey to Trois Rivières, the "home of his heart," as Father Frederic had called it at his Silver Jubilee as Commissary of the Holy Land in 1913. He had lived there most of the Canadian period of his life. He had made it his favorite residence. It was therefore only fitting that he should sleep his last sleep there.

For a while there was a holy rivalry, worthy of the Middle Ages, between the friaries of Montreal and Trois Rivières for the possession of his body. This brotherly competition is evidence of the veneration in which Father Frederic was held. The Very Rev. Ange Marie Hiral, guardian of the Franciscans in Trois Rivières, made a strong plea for the rights of his friary. As soon as he heard about Father Frederic's serious and incurable illness, he took the necessary measures with his provincial, the Bishop of Trois Rivières, and a masonry contractor. He had a crypt made of cement and bricks built in the basement of the conventual church to receive the body of the servant of God who had died in the odor of sanctity. In the end the rights of Trois Rivières were fully acknowledged.

The last remains, accompanied by delegations from Montreal and Trois Rivières, were given a real ovation of popular faith and confidence in the latter town. It was Saturday afternoon, August 5, that is, a time when the stores and factories were closed. A large crowd gathered and paid honor to the humble friar. They were especially proud to welcome him back, as many had feared that he might be buried in Montreal. The plain wooden coffin was carried by the friars

through the enormous crowd standing on both sides of the street from the station to the Franciscan Church. There he lay in state while, throughout the evening and all day Sunday, hundreds and thousands of people came to pour out their heart and their prayers at the feet of the deceased. They came rather to seek his intercession than to pray for him. Such was their veneration that most of the visitors touched his body with religious objects or asked for a bit of his habit, which they took home as a precious relic. Several trustworthy persons declared that they had obtained special favors. Others described cures which they attributed to the intercession of the dead friar.

On Monday, August 7, in the parish church of The Seven Joys of Our Lady which adjoins the friary, the Very Rev. Ange Marie Hiral, guardian of the friary and pastor of the parish, chanted the Solemn Funeral Mass. The sanctuary was filled with priests, while the spacious naves were too small to contain the crowd. Bishop François Xavier Cloutier of Trois Rivières was present and presided over the absolution and burial. Before that ceremony, the Bishop faithfully expressed the conviction of his clergy and people when he eloquently sketched the basic features of that life of good deeds and virtues in the following words:

It is not a custom of the Franciscans to eulogize their dead. But I cannot allow this occasion to pass without stating what everyone is saying: the Reverend Father Frederic died in the odor of sanctity. I was in Jerusalem in 1901, and I had the opportunity of visiting the Holy Places where the Reverend Father had been Vicar Custodial for a long time. Wherever I went, I was told about Good Father Frederic, and he was spoken of as a saintly religious.

But if I am not allowed to speak at more length of his virtues, I can speak of his achievements and especially of two which the Reverend Father accomplished in our midst. In 1888 the Rev. Father Frederic was sent by the superiors of his Order and founded the Commissariat of the Holy Land in our episcopal see. The Commissariat led to the foundation of the friary in 1903, and a little later the flourishing parish of the Seven Joys of Our Lady was established.

It was Father Frederic too who played a major part in the development of the Shrine of Our Lady of the Rosary at Cap de la Madeleine.

I wonder which parish in my diocese has not admired his virtues and the power of his apostolic preaching.

Well, my brethren, we must thank the good God for all the graces which He has bestowed on us through this good Father, and in accordance with the wish of Holy Church we shall offer him our most fervent prayers.

After the absolution the coffin was carried to its tomb. In the conventual church of the Franciscans in Trois Rivières, the friar's last resting place is indicated by a simple grey granite gravestone set in the floor of the aisle in front of the main altar, near the communion railing. Under the potence cross of the arms of the Holy Land appears the following inscription (in French): "HERE RESTS THE REV. FR. FREDERIC JANSOONE, O.F.M., EX-VICAR-CUSTODIAL, FOUNDER OF THE COMMISSARIAT, COMMISSARY OF THE HOLY LAND IN CANADA, BORN IN GHYVELDE, FRANCE, NOVEMBER XIX MDCCCXXXVIII, DIED IN ODOR OF SANCTITY IN MONTREAL AUGUST IV MCMXVI. R.I.P."

While awaiting the day of his glorification, the imposing tombstone now stands in the center of the interesting crypt-museum which was built in 1938 in the basement of the Franciscan church in Trois Rivières. Every year thousands of visitors of all classes come from Canada and the United States to visit the crypt. They have heard about the Servant of God either at home or during a pilgrimage to Cap de la Madeleine. They come to be edified at the sight of his former belongings and at the account of his virtues. Like so many others, they come to ask for a favor or to fulfill an obligation of gratitude. This crypt is both a memorial and a witness. It is evidence of the lasting impression which Good Father Frederic made on the memory of the people of French Canada. The test of time has sufficiently demonstrated the permanence of his reputation for sanctity.

After his death a unanimous and spontaneous tribute was paid to that reputation in newspapers, magazines, and private letters. The highest testimonials of veneration were associated with manifestations of sympathy that arrived from all parts of the Province of Quebec and Canada and even from abroad, from France, Rome, or Palestine. It is impossible to record here all the eulogies that were bestowed on him at that time. We shall mention only two particularly significant ones: the first by a layman and the second by a bishop.

In the Trois Rivières newspaper *Le Bien Public* of August, 10, 1916, Joseph Barnard, a first-rate journalist, wrote a eulogy of the life and achievements of Father Frederic that was both just and eloquent. He especially brought out the lesson of that life:

The entire life of this voluntary poor man was a sermon by example.... At a time when the struggle for all sorts of pleasures, the pursuit of comfort, and the avoidance of all vexations, is feverishly practised by all classes of society, when socialism teaches the working class to hate the middle class and to aspire even by strikes and revolts to the life of ease that a small wage-earner cannot attain, this holy religious, whose birth and education justified the highest ambition, spent his life holding out his hand, voluntarily humiliating himself in all the rebuffs which are the lot of the poor. The spectacle of this pauper should be an impressive one for distorted socialists and for those who have an insatiable appetite of pleasure. It proves that poverty in itself, when accepted in a Christian spirit, is in no way repulsive, and that when it is not a result of vice, immorality, or foul laziness, it is very honorable and deserves to be honored by those who are prosperous. It teaches the charity which is necessary between social classes, the affectionate sympathy of the rich for the poor, and the grateful sympathy of the poor for the rich. It unites the classes instead of separating them. To the doctrine of hatred, it opposes the Gospel doctrine of love.

Today the saintly old man rests in the bosom of God after having spent his whole life doing the work of a true priest of Christ. The fruit of that very humble and full life is no doubt admirable from the Christian point of view. It is no less admirable and wholesome from the social and humanitarian point of view.

Bishop Joseph M. Emard of Valleyfield spoke of the Servant of God as of a saint:

A true son of St. Francis, Father Frederic always walked in the footsteps of his seraphic model, reproducing by his example of sublime virtues the most striking features of the holy Founder's life. Father Frederic will remain in the memory of all because of the edification that his burning charity and his proverbial poverty spread everywhere. The Bishop of Valleyfield with all his clergy and all his faithful will ever have an imperishable debt of gratitude to him for the very generous help which he gave in the foundation of our Monastery of Poor Clares.

The name of Good Father Frederic will forever remain linked to the Shrine at Cap de la Madeleine. On August 14, 1916, therefore, the Oblate Fathers celebrated a Solemn Mass of gratitude toward "one of the founders of the Shrine of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary." The Rev. Ambroise Leblanc, O.F.M., officiated, with Fathers Perdereau, O.M.I., Superior of the Oblates, and Magnan, O.M.I., director of pilgrimages, as deacon and subdeacon. In the choir were the Very Rev. Ange Marie Hiral and a number of Franciscans and Oblates. A large crowd filled the church. Before the chanting of the *libera*, Father Arthur Joyal, O.M.I., delivered a magnificent sermon that was both well informed and filled with an emotion that everyone present shared. He took as his text: *In memoria aeterna erit justus*, the just man whom we mourn will leave an ineffaceable memory (Psalm 11: 7). He noted that a debt of gratitude on the part of the parish was being discharged that morning for all the spiritual good which Father Frederic had accomplished in his ministry in the Cap de la Madeleine district, where he was leaving "a memory that cannot be erased." Above all "a national debt of gratitude" was being discharged, because as Bishop Cloutier had said, "Father Frederic had played a major part in the development of the National Shrine of Our Lady of the Rosary." After having briefly outlined Good Father Frederic's Marian apostolate, the preacher concluded with this vibrant peroration:

He is no longer alive, but his memory will remain indelible. Yes, venerated Father.... you will live on in the parish of Cap de la Madeleine which will forever be imbued with the good odor of your mortifications and the perfume of your virtues. You will live on in the old Shrine where you labored selflessly for so many years. Your name will remain printed in letters of gold on the list of its benefactors. You will always be called the prophet of Our Lady of the Cape, the herald of her pilgrimages, and the outstanding propagandist of her **Annales**.

You will live on in all Canada, that adopted country of yours, that humble France in America where you made your admirable Franciscan family flourish once again with its numerous good works. You will live on — we firmly hope — you will live on forever in our heavenly home.

You will perhaps one day live on in the entire Catholic Church, thanks to the wonders that have already been attributed to you during your lifetime and to those which, we trust, you will accomplish after your death.⁶

These eloquent hopes uttered at the foot of the miraculous statue of Our Lady of the Cape are the best possible testimonial of the glorious spiritual presence of Good Father Frederic among the French Canadian people and in his greatest undertaking, the Marian Shrine at Cap de la Madeleine.

Father Frederic Janssoone is still present among us in the vitality of his works, his reputation for sanctity which remains untouched, the granting of favors for which many souls are grateful, and his salutary light-bringing mission. He extends the relations of our country by connecting it with the pacific crusade for the Holy Places in Palestine, by favoring good-neighbor contacts with the United States, and by strengthening the brotherhood between French Canada and France. He directs his message to the whole world: to the selfish pleasure-loving world he brings his message of penance and Christian effort, organized apostolate, and the harmony between the active and the contemplative life. Finally, to all of us in this century that has been called "the century of Mary," he brings a great love for the Blessed Virgin.

For the life of this Servant of God ran its course under the Morning Star: his cradle was rocked in the Marian fief

of French Flanders, and his tomb lies almost within the shadow of the National Shrine of Our Lady in Canada. Nearly all of his life as a priest was consecrated to Palestine, the homeland of Mary and her Divine Son.

We offer our prayers to the Queen of the Holy Rosary, the Queen of the Universe, that she may one day, even on earth, give back the crown which she received at the beginning of this century from the hands of her devoted servant. We may earnestly wish that the Church will glorify this apostle of Mary who, according to the plans of Divine Providence, became the apostle of two worlds.

NOTES

CHAPTER 1. MARY'S REALM

1. The Janssoone home was not damaged in the First World War; World War II left nothing but part of one wall, which was later removed. Now only the foundations are to be seen. The barn is still standing. It is about 15 feet broad by 25 in height and 20 long. Its thatched roof has been replaced by tiles.

The French Flemish people pronounce the double o in "Janssoone" like "sun" in English. "Ghyvelde" is pronounced with a hard "g": "Gheeveld."

2. The Second World War destroyed Ghyvelde's two windmills, its church, and the churches of Leffrinckoucke, Uxem, and Zuydcoote.

3. Here are the dates of birth and death of the Dumont and Janssoone children; with their most used personal names in italics:

The Dumont children:

1. *Jean Baptiste François Cornil*, born in Warhem, June 23, 1817; died in Dunkerque, May 1, 1889.

2. *Mélanie*, born May 21, 1819; died August 2, 1819.

3. *Isabelle Marie Victoire*, born in Ghyvelde, June 4, 1821; married, February 6, 1839, *Pierre Emmanuel Deswarte*, a farmer in Leffrickoucke; died in Rosendael, August 13, 1896. *Victoire* is the mother of *Léonie*, the principal witness for posterity of the childhood and youth of her uncle *Frederic*. *Léonie* was born in 1849; married *Laurent Clodérée* of Loon Plage; and died there on March 4, 1925.

4. *Marie Sophie Rosalie*, born in Ghyvelde, August 24, 1823; ill all her life; lived a long time with *Victoire*; died unmarried in Ypres, Belgium, March 15, 1892.

5. *Marie Emilie Rosalie*, born in Ghyvelde, December 18, 1826; married *Jean François Warlop*, May 20, 1850; died August 12, 1904, in Dunkerque.

The Janssoone children:

1. *Pierre Jean François*, born, December 12, 1829; died, December 13, 1830.

2. An unnamed child, died at birth in 1831.

3. *Pierre Antoine Benoit*, born in Ghyvelde, April 9, 1832; became a priest of the Paris Foreign Missions Society and a missionary in Bangalore, India, where he died on March 18, 1912.

4. *Anne* (called *Annette* or *Nanette*) *Thérèse Constance*, born in Ghyvelde, May 5, 1833; became *Sister Marie des Anges*, an Augustinian nun in Arras in 1854; died May 12, 1872.

5. *Clémence Stéphanie*, born August 8, 1834; died, October 9, 1835.

6. *Charles Léopold*, born January 3, 1836; died, May 2, 1839.

7. *Henri Frédéric*, born in Ghyvelde, April 30, 1837; died by accidental drowning while a seminarian at Cambrai, August 24, 1867.

8. *FREDERIC Cornil*, born November 19, 1838; died, August 4, 1916; the SERVANT OF GOD.

CHAPTER 2. THE SOUL OF A HOME

1. "Nécrologie de M. Janssoone," in *Compte-rendu des travaux de 1912 de la Société des Missions Etrangères de Paris* (Paris, 1913) p. 438.
2. *Annales du Très Saint Rosaire* (Cap de la Madeleine) 3, 1894, 8.
3. His confirmation certificate has not been found.

CHAPTER 3. BLOW AFTER BLOW

1. The old buildings of the school were destroyed by the war in 1940. Only a section of the new buildings, erected a few years before, remained.

CHAPTER 4. THE UPS AND DOWNS OF A VOCATION

1. Albert Ledieu (1804-1849) married Amélie Hadon (1810-1886). Their children were: Esther (1840-1898), wife of Paul Taffin; Laure (1842-1890), wife of Dr. Jules Vincent (1839-1918) of Armentières; Eliana (1845-1884), wife of Georges Salomé (1849-1883); Albert (1846-1918), bachelor; Marie-Louise (1848-1911), unmarried; Julie (1849-1881), unmarried.

2. Letter from M. Alfred Salomé, of Estaires, Sept. 12, 1951, to the author. I must express my thanks to M. Salomé for the important information on the Estaires background of Frederic's youth which he gave me personally in May, 1950, and in correspondence. The obituary of Rev. Pierre Janssoone, to which Father Frederic contributed and which appears in the *Compte-rendu des travaux de 1912 de la Société des Missions Etrangères de Paris* (Paris, 1913), pp. 437-447, also contains valuable data on the childhood and youth of the two Janssoone brothers.

3. Another informant states that Frederic also stayed in Estaires in the inn, "A la Ville de Bruxelles," which was run by the family of Jean-Baptiste Durez-Bailleul.

4. *Compte-rendu des travaux de 1912 de la Société des Missions Etrangères de Paris* (Paris, 1913), p. 441.

CHAPTER 5. IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI

1. Bordeaux, January 2, 1872.
2. This church was destroyed during World War II.
3. Letter to Very Rev. Ange Marie Hiral, O.F.M., December 5, 1912.
4. Hugolin Lemay, O.F.M., *Les manuscrits du R. P. Frédéric Janssoone, O.F.M., — Description et analyse* [Pro manuscripto] (Firenze-Quaracchi, 1935), p. XI.

CHAPTER 6. EARLY MINISTRY

1. Sermon by Father Augustin Bouynot at the Silver Jubilee of Father Frederic as Commissary of the Holy Land, in June, 1913.

2. 2 Cor. 12: 15.

3. *Vie de Saint François d'Assise par l'Abbé B., revue et complétée par deux religieux franciscains* (Bordeaux, Brion, 1871. 219 pp.). This first work by Father Frederic escaped the bibliographical flair of Father Hugolin Lemay, O.F.M., although the latter wrote in his *Bibliographie et Iconographie du R. P. Frédéric* that he believed "he had omitted no work" (cf. Fr. Ignace-Marie, O.F.M., "Le R. P. Frédéric de Ghyvelde, O.F.M. (1838-1916) — Premier Supérieur du Couvent de Bordeaux, Commissaire de Terre Sainte au Canada" in *Revue Franciscaine* of Bordeaux 70, 1940, 40, footnote).

4. The Italian word *ritiro* designates a more solitary monastery in which the religious live a more contemplative life and strive to attain a higher level of perfection.

5. *Speculum Perfectionis*, 27; Thomas of Celano, *Vita Secunda*, 22.

CHAPTER 7. BORDEAUX

1. *Revue Franciscaine* of Bordeaux, 3, 1873, 297 ff.

2. The Consecration of the Franciscan Order to the Sacred Heart took place at Paray-le-Monial on July 14, 1875.

3. Rev. Othon de Pavie, *Cinquantenaire de la Province St. Louis d'Anjou, O.F.M., en Aquitaine*, 1860-1910 (Bourges, 1910) p. 46.

4. This circular letter, which was written at the Friary of Our Lady of the Angels in Bordeaux and which dealt with the foundation of that community, was also signed by Father Frederic as pro-secretary.

5. Paris, July 27, 1873.

CHAPTER 8. A BEAUTIFUL DREAM COMES TRUE

1. Fr. Marcellino da Civezza, M.O., *Saggio di bibliographia sanfrancescana* (Prato, 1879) p. 130; *Storia universale delle Missioni francesane* (Prato, 1891) v. 7, pt. 2, p. 316.

2. *Voyage en Terre Sainte*, in his manuscript notebook no. 8, p. 45. These lines written by Father Frederic reproduce several sentences which his brother Pierre wrote to his parents and friends on July 20, 1866, on board the steamer *Péluse*, when leaving the Straits of Bonifacio, and which are printed below in italics: "Our party of ten went to say Holy Mass at Notre Dame de la Garde, perched on its rock from which you look down on the town and the sea. When will our Dunkerque people also see the Virgin towering over both their town and their sea...? Many thoughts were stirring in my heart. This was the principal one: Great God, who created the earth and this majestic expanse of water, this poor child, born in an unknown village in a corner of France, is nevertheless Your priest."

3. "Notes d'un pèlerin," in *Revue Franciscaine* of Bordeaux, 7, 1877, 308ff.

4. Fr. Frédéric de Ghyvelde, O.F.M., *Journal de Voyage, France-Italie-Palestine 1876-1877* (Trois-Rivières, Editions B.P.F., No. 1. [1946]) pp. 24 ff.

5. "Notes d'un pèlerin" in the *Revue Franciscaine* of Bordeaux, 8, 1878, 377.

6. *Ibid.*, 7, 1877, 348ff.

7. *Baksheesh*, meaning tip or alms, and spoken with outstretched hand, is the word which a foreigner hears more frequently than any other in the Near East.

CHAPTER 9. THE HOLY LAND MISSIONER

1. Père Frédéric, "Mission d'Egypte," in *Revue Franciscaine* of Bordeaux 7, 1877, 278.

CHAPTER 10. THE VICAR CUSTODIAL

1. Custody comes from the Latin word *custos* meaning guardian.

2. Archives of the General Curia of the Friars Minor, Rome: *Terra Sancta V*, 1885-1889, file entitled *Reliquiae Visitationis Generalis Terrae Sanctae Factae per P. Eusebium Fermendzin*, Def. Gen. Ann. 1886.

3. *Annales du Très Saint Rosaire* 4, 1895, 191.

4. *The Pilgrim of Palestine* became the present popular *Crusader's Almanac* when the Commissariat of the Holy Land was moved from New York to Washington in 1898. Father Frederic's articles were of course written in French and translated into English in New York. — *Tr.*

CHAPTER 11. THE APOSTLE AND SPIRITUAL GUIDE OF PILGRIMAGES

1. *De Québec à Jérusalem* (Québec, 1884) p. 224.
2. "Nécrologie de Pierre Janssoone" in *Compte-rendu des travaux de 1912 de la Société des Missions Etrangères de Paris* (Paris, 1913) p. 444.
3. "A Tertiary Priest in the East Indies (Hindustan)" in *The Pilgrim of Palestine and Messenger of St. Francis* 1, June 10 & 17, 1888, nos. 24 & 25. The decree of the Holy See stipulating that professed religious could not at the same time belong to the Third Order was not published until July 16, 1887.
4. *Compte-rendu des travaux de 1912 de la Société des Missions Etrangères de Paris* (Paris, 1913) p. 445.

CHAPTER 12. BEGGAR FOR THE HOLY PLACES

1. Italics added by the author.
2. Mme Sodar de Vaulx, *Les splendeurs de la Terre Sainte* (Paris, [1889]) pp. 146ff.
3. Letter of June 14, 1881.
4. Letter from the Minister General to the Custos, May 19, 1881.

CHAPTER 13. THE FIRST TRIP TO CANADA

1. "He who is just, let him be just still." Apoc. 22: 11.
2. Père Frédéric, V.C., "Les fonctions du T.R.P. [Vicaire] Custodial à Jérusalem. L'oeuvre de Terre Sainte," an article in the Quebec daily newspaper *Le Canadien*, September 26, 1881.
3. "Mission franciscaine de Terre Sainte" in *Le Courrier du Canada*, August 31, 1881;
"Le Tiers Ordre de saint François d'Assise," *ibid.*, September 3, 1881.
"Les fonctions du T.R.P. [Vicaire] Custodial à Jérusalem. L'oeuvre de Terre Sainte," in *Le Canadien*, September 26, 1881;
"Le chemin de la croix et les Franciscains. Le Cordon séraphique," *ibid.*, September 27, 1881, and in *Le Courrier du Canada*, September 24, 1881;
"Le Tiers Ordre de la pénitence. Esprit du Tiers Ordre," in *Le Courrier du Canada*, September 27, 28, and 29, 1881.
4. Père Frédéric, V.C., "Les fonctions du T.R.P. [Vicaire] Custodial," *loc. cit.*
5. First published, in 1885 and 1886, in the *Revue Franciscaine* of Bordeaux and then in the *Petite Revue du Tiers Ordre* of Montreal, these articles were collected and reprinted in 1946 by Rev. Paul Eugène Trudel, O.F.M., in a booklet entitled PERE FREDERIC DE GHYVELDE, O.F.M., *Mon premier voyage au Canada, 1881-1882* (Editions B.P.F. No. 2, Trois Rivières, 1946. 51pp.). That narrative constitutes the principal documentary source of this chapter.
6. Père Frédéric de Ghyvelde, O.F.M., *Mon premier voyage au Canada, 1881-1882*, pp. 14ff, and *Revue du Tiers Ordre et de la Terre Sainte* 12, 1896, 49. The estimate of three thousand persons is perhaps exaggerated, simply a guess designed to give an idea of the size of the crowd.

Dr. Albert Jobin, the author of a history of the parish, has informed me that the church could contain in 1881 two thousand persons at the most, if it were completely filled.

7. The Abbé Joseph Donaldson of Quebec, who gave me information about the enthusiasm of the people of Quebec for Father Frederic's retreat at Saint Roch.

8. Père Frédéric, *Mon premier voyage au Canada*, p. 22; "Etude historique sur le Tiers Ordre au Canada" in *Revue du Tiers Ordre et de la Terre Sainte* 24, 1908, 41, and 31, 1915, 288.

9. T. R. P. Colomban Dreyer, O.F.M., in *Revue du Tiers Ordre et de la Terre Sainte* 24, 1908, 41, and 31, 1915, 288.

10. *Le Canadien*, September 13, 1881.

11. *Le Canadien*, September 18, 1881.

12. Rev. Augustin Bouynot, O.F.M., in a sermon given at the Silver Jubilee of Father Frederic as Commissary of the Holy Land, June 25, 1913.

13. *La Concorde* (a Trois Rivières newspaper), October 7, 1881.

14. *Mon premier voyage au Canada*, p. 37, and *La Concorde*, October 10, 1881.

15. *Le Journal des Trois Rivières*, October 3, 1881, p. 2.

16. Letter of January 3, 1882. Father Marcellino da Civezza reproduced it in Italian in his *Storia universale delle Missioni francescane* (Prato, 1891) v. 7, pt. 2, p. 317-322.

17. *Mon premier voyage au Canada*, p. 50.

CHAPTER 14. THE FIRST COMMISSARY OF THE HOLY LAND IN CANADA

1. *The Pilgrim of Palestine and Messenger of Saint Francis* 1, 1888, 397.

2. Letter of Bishop Laflèche from Saint Justin, June 11, 1888. This letter and the other documents concerning the foundation of the Commissariat of the Holy Land in Trois Rivières are in the archives of the Vice-Postulator of the Cause of Beatification of Good Father Frederic in Trois Rivières; cf. the latter's manuscript, *Commissariat de Terre Sainte aux Trois Rivières*.

3. New York, June 9, 1888.

4. Letter of September 4, 1888.

5. Letter to Father Colomban Marie, Ash Wednesday, 1903.

6. Phil. 1: 23. Letter to Father Raphael, September 24, 1902.

7. Letter to Father Ange Marie Hiral, O.F.M., Guardian of the Friary in Montreal, March 14, 1911.

8. Mr. Philippe Dufresne narrated this incident to me in Trois Rivières on August 17, 1952.

9. Letter to the Custos and the Discretorium of the Custody, January 10, 1890. (At that time the Canadian dollar was worth five francs.)

10. Letter to the Custos, March 8, 1890.

11. Letter to Msgr. Marquis, September 10, 1896.

12. Letter of May 24, 1892.

13. Letter of May 6, 1892.

14. Letter of April 22, 1903.

15. Postulatory Letter (mss., in the archives of the Vice Postulation of Good Father Frederic).

CHAPTER 15. THE PROPHET OF OUR LADY OF THE CAPE

1. This seventeen-page booklet was written in Montreal (no doubt in the Franciscan Friary) by Father Frederic during the first fortnight of May, 1897. In a letter which he sent from that city of Father Duguay on May 17, he gave

an outline of a historical sketch on the Shrine at the Cape which he was preparing for the Montreal newspaper *La Presse*, in which it was published on May 22, 1897. He wrote to Father Duguay: "It occurs to me that if I had this in a booklet of 16 to 20 pages, with one or two pictures, for our pilgrimages,.... it would perhaps do some good..." And he added: "God be blessed in all things. We must thank Him, I believe, for this result, which I had not expected; I positively did not know how to get this writing done; I had set aside 15 whole days for it. I think that it was the Blessed Virgin who guided my mind and my pen all the time." Soon afterward, his apostolic desire was fulfilled: *La Presse* printed the text substantially as it is found in the above-mentioned booklet. It sketches the events in the history of the Shrine at the Cape until 1893. It is of course one of the primary documentary sources of this chapter.

2. Rev. Paul Emile Breton, O.M.I., *Cap de la Madeleine, cité mystique de Marie*, (1937), p. 143.

3. Letter to Bishop Laflèche, October 19, 1884.

4. Abbé L. E. Duguay, sermon at the Golden Jubilee of Father Frederic's religious profession, July 22, 1915 (mss.).

5. *Idem*.

6. See the conclusion of the booklet entitled *Le sanctuaire du Très Saint Rosaire du Cap de la Madeleine* (1897).

7. *Journal des Trois Rivières*, October 11, 1888.

8. Father L. E. Duguay, sermon at the Golden Jubilee of Good Father Frederic's religious profession, July 22, 1915.

9. Letter of July 30, 1891.

10. Sermon at the Golden Jubilee of Father Frederic's religious profession.

11. *Revue du Tiers Ordre et de la Terre Sainte*, 9, October 1893, 463.

12. *Annales du Très Saint Rosaire*, 5, May 1896, 83ff.

13. *Annales de Notre Dame du Cap* 35, 1926, 124.

14. Sermon of the Rev. Arthur Joyal, O.M.I., at Cap de la Madeleine on August 14, 1916, in *Annales du Très Saint Rosaire* 25, 1916, 380.

15. A popular English Marian magazine entitled *Our Lady of the Cape* has been published at The Shrine since 1942. — *Tr*.

CHAPTER 16. THE APOSTLE OF THE THIRD ORDER

1. Letter from Father Frederic to Father Provancher, Paris, July 19, 1881.

2. The *Petite Revue du Tiers Ordre et des intérêts du Coeur de Jésus* changed its title in March, 1889, to *Petite Revue du Tiers Ordre et de S. François*; and in 1891 it passed from the hands of the Sulpician Fathers, who were at that time the directors of the Third Order Fraternity of Montreal, to those of the Franciscans, who had just arrived in Canada (1890), and it assumed a new title: *Revue du Tiers Ordre et de la Terre Sainte*. This title was due to the influence of Father Frederic, who prepared the way for the change after his return in June, 1888: cf. letters from Father Frederic to Very Rev. Father Raphael, O.F.M., August 3 and 10, 1888, April 7 and October 21, 1889; Father Frederic's report to the Father General, February 26, 1889; Father Frederic's letter to Father Jean Baptiste, O.F.M., guardian of the Montreal friary, July 4, 1890; Father Frederic's announcement in the Third Order magazine for January, 1890, p. 353; "*La Petite Revue du Tiers Ordre* notifies its subscribers that it ceases publication with the present issue of January, 1890, and that it will soon be published again under the direction of the Fathers of the First Order, under the title *Revue du Tiers Ordre et de la Terre Sainte*." That title was retained until 1917, i.e. five months after the death of the first Commissary of the Holy Land in Canada.

3. Père Frédéric, *Vie de saint François d'Assise* (Montreal, 1894) p. 238, footnote.

4. Père Frédéric, "Etude historique du Tiers Ordre au Canada," in *Revue du Tiers Ordre et de la Terre Sainte* 13, 1897, 229, and letter to the Very Rev. Raphael Delarbre, O.F.M., September 4, 1889.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 228.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 264.

7. *Annales du Très Saint Rosaire* 5, 1896, 16 ff.

8. Père Frédéric, "Etude historique du Tiers Ordre au Canada," in *Revue du Tiers Ordre et de la Terre Sainte* 14, 1898, 51.

9. *Revue du Tiers Ordre et de la Terre Sainte* 13, 1897, 420, 424.

10. Letter of Father Frederic to the Minister General, May 25, 1889, in *L'Orient Serafico*, 1889.

11. This was at Saint Ferdinand d'Halifax in the Diocese of Quebec, where he gave a retreat to establish the Third Order from October 9 to 13, 1889. He noted in his sermon notebook: "Six sermons a day, as follows: 3 to the parish, 1 to the religious, 1 to their pupils, 1 to the Sisters' pupils. Received into the Archconfraternity of the Cord of St. Francis the entire parish, and 300 persons into the Third Order." At Sainte Anne de la Pêrade in the Diocese of Trois Rivières, from September 21 to 24, 1890, he also gave 6 sermons a day, i.e. visitation of the Third Order and a retreat to the pupils of two religious communities, the Brothers and Sisters.

12. The "mission in the mountains" is again Saint Ferdinand d'Halifax. The Third Order register of that parish confirms his report, and the novices which Father Frederic enrolled in 1889, "more than 300 persons," made their profession the following year. From December 8 to 15, 1889, during a major retreat given by Father Frederic to establish the Third Order in the village of Saint Tite in the Diocese of Trois Rivières, he received 350 novices, and in September, 1889, at Saint Joseph de Lévis in the Diocese of Quebec 600 persons.

13. Saint Tite, according to Father Frederic's manuscripts.

14. In *Congrès national du Tiers Ordre franciscain* in Montreal, 1921, pp. 100 ff.

15. Ephrem [Longpré], O.F.M., *Le Tiers Ordre séculier de saint François d'Assise au Canada. Esquisse historique* (Montreal, 1921). p. 83.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 107.

CHAPTER 17. THE PREACHER

1. Testimony of Father Xavier Ricomes, O.F.M. (unpublished notes).

2. Postulatory letter (*mss.*).

3. See Henri-Paul Bergeron, C.S.C., *Brother André, C.S.C., The Apostle of St. Joseph* (New York, Benziger Brothers, 1938) p. 137-138.

4. *La Concorde*, Trois Rivières, October 10, 1881, p. 3, and December 26, 1881, p. 2.

5. *Idem*, December 30, 1881.

6. *Le Journal des Trois Rivières*, December 26, 1881, p. 2.

7. *Idem*, September 29, 1881, p. 3.

8. *Idem*, October 3, 1881, p. 2.

9. I Cor. 9: 20.

10. Fr. Benoît, O.F.M., "Le T. R. P. Frédéric" in *Almanach de Saint François* (Montreal, 1917).

11. Soeur M. Michel Archange, P.F.M., *Par ce signe tu vivras. Histoire de la Congrégation des Petites Franciscaines de Marie, 1889-1955* (Baie Saint Paul, 1955) pp. 65 ff.

12. I Cor. 2: 1, 4-5.

13. Letter of March 15, 1909.

14. St. Salvator of Horta (1520-1567), a Spanish Franciscan laybrother who was canonized in 1938, was the great miracle-worker of the sixteenth century.

He performed innumerable miracles. He healed more than two thousand sick persons a week with the Sign of the Cross, telling them to go to confession and communion. During one Holy Week the number of cures rose to 4000 and on one Annunciation Day to 6000.

15. *La Revue du Tiers-Ordre et de la Terre Sainte* 13, 1897, 67ff., gave an account of Father Frederic's visit to Loretteville: "The sick tertiaries were not deprived of the benefits of the holy visitation. The Reverend Father considered it a duty to bring to them in their homes the consolations of the Seraphic family and even some relief from their physical ills. It was during one of these visits that a sick woman felt greatly improved while venerating a relic from the Holy Land. And since that time the improvement has consistently progressed, as if to testify that St. Francis had really, though invisibly, passed among us." This account undoubtedly pertains to Mlle Laura Falardeau.

CHAPTER 18. THE APOSTOLIC WRITER

1. P. Hugolin, O.F.M., *Bibliographie et iconographie du serviteur de Dieu, le R. P. Frédéric Janssoone, O.F.M.* (1838-1916) (Quebec, 1932. 62 pp.). This bibliography needs a little revision, even for the writings of the Servant of God.

P. Hugolin Lemay, O.F.M., *Les manuscrits du R. P. Frédéric Janssoone, O.F.M. Description et analyse.* (Firenze-Quaracchi, 1935; 71 pp.).

2. Letter of November 21, 1892; cf. Father Frederic's letters of January 11, 1893, and January 20, 1893, etc., to the same correspondent.

3. Father Frederic in the *Revue Franciscaine* of Bordeaux 10, 1880, p. 216.

4. Rev. Pamphile D., O.F.M., "Le Père Frédéric, apôtre de l'Evangile en Canada," in *Revue Franciscaine* (Montreal) 54, 1938, 509-511.

5. A few years ago I met a country pastor of the Diocese of Quebec who was full of veneration for Father Frederic, as the latter had formerly healed his five-year-old brother in Deschambault. This priest had a great admiration for the friar's book on Heaven. He told me: "I leave it open on my radio console, and from time to time I read passages from it. The chapter on the angels is the most complete treatment of the subject that I have found. It is a treatise that gathers together things that are not found in ordinary books."

6. Letter of April 16, 1895.

7. Fr. Frédéric, "Etude historique du Tiers Ordre au Canada," in *Revue du Tiers Ordre et de la Terre Sainte* 13, 1897, 377.

8. This account, which appeared first in magazine articles, was published a few years ago by Father Paul Eugène Trudel, O.F.M., in a brochure entitled *Mon premier voyage au Canada, 1881-1882* (Collection B.P.F. no. 2, Trois Rivières. 1946. 51 pp.).

9. Also published in 1946 in Trois Rivières: *Journal de Voyage — France — Italie — Palestine, 1876-1877* (Editions B.P.F. no. 1, 110 pp.).

10. P. Frédéric de Ghyvelde, O.S.F., *Vie de Saint François d'Assise* (Montreal, 1894) p. 154, footnote.

11. *Le ciel, séjour des élus* (Montreal, 1912) p. 149, footnote.

12. "It is enough to read the sermons of St. Francis de Sales to feel in them the almost exclusive preoccupation of *edifying* [my italics] far more than instructing, and this holds true even in sermons given to lay audiences. It is sufficient to look at the list of books which he recommends to Philothea in the *Introduction to the Devout Life*: she is to nourish her devotion with useful reading; the Saint does not think of telling her to instruct herself in doctrine or to strengthen the theological foundations of her supernatural life" (Abbé Jacques Leclercq, *Saint François de Sales, docteur de la perfection*, Paris, Beauchesne, 1928, p. 56).

CHAPTER 19. LAST YEARS

1. Letter to the Very Reverend Raphael Delarbre, O.F.M., May 12, 1902.
2. Letter to the Very Reverend Colomban Dreyer, O.F.M., November, 18, 1902.
3. Letter of December 13, 1896.
4. Letter of August 21, 1899 (Quebec Archdiocesan Archives).
5. Letter of December 28, 1902.
6. "La diffusion des saints Evangiles" in *Revue du Tiers Ordre et de la Terre Sainte* 22, 1906, 251 ff.
7. Letter from Mother Marie-Joseph de Jésus to Father Mathieu-M. Daunais, O.F.M., March 14, 1917.
8. Letter from Father Frederic to the Superior of the Precious Blood Sisters in Joliette, May, 18, 1909.
9. Letter of Mother Marie-Joseph de Jésus, *loc. cit.*
10. This lady herself, Mme Arthur Boillard (Anne-Berthe Gosselin), told me these facts in Quebec City on November 15, 1951. She resides in Sherbrooke, P. Q.
11. Letter from Mother Marie-Joseph de Jésus to Father Mathieu M. Daunais, O.F.M., March 14, 1917, and postulatory letter from the Poor Clares, January 18, 1933 (*mss.*).
12. Father Mathieu M. Daunais, O.F.M., *L'Apostolat du Père Frédéric* (Trois Rivières, [1929]) pp. 152ff, and *Les dernières années du Bon Père Frédéric* (Saint Justin, 1936) p. 11.
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Ibid.*
15. Rev. Mathieu M. Daunais, O.F.M., *L'apostolat du Père Frédéric*, pp. 157ff.
16. Letter to M. Léger Brousseau, editor, February 22, 1915.
17. Letter to Father Colomban Dreyer, O.F.M., October 25, 1908.
18. Ollé-Laprune, *Le prix de la vie* (Paris, 1906) p. 281.

CHAPTER 20. A ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI OF THE 20TH CENTURY

1. Br. Noël Gosselin, O.F.M., *Le bon Père Frédéric parle aux enfants* (unpublished talk, 1938).
2. His Excellency Bishop Ange-Marie Hiral, O.F.M.
3. P. Mathieu M. Daunais, O.F.M., *L'apostolat du Père Frédéric* (Trois Rivières, 1929) p. 151.
4. Fr. Ignace Marie [Freudenreich], O.F.M., "Le Père Frédéric de Ghyvelde, O.F.M.," in *Revue franciscaine* of Bordeaux 70, 1940, 39, and "Sur la tombe du Père Frédéric" in *Almanach de saint François* (Montreal, 1941) p. 44.
5. P. Frédéric, V.C., "Les fonctions du T. R. P. [Vicaire] Custodial à Jérusalem" in *Le Canadien*, September 26, 1881.
6. Letter of March 12, 1892.
7. July, 1895.
8. This account was given to me by the only eye-witness, Mr. Zotique Rho, in a letter (August 26, 1952), then in a personal interview at his home in Bécancour (November 23, 1952), and in a letter of February 1, 1953. Cf. another version of the incident in a letter of Theodoric Paré, O.F.M., dated Montreal February 19, 1948, to Onésime Lamontagne, O.F.M., Vice-Postulator.
9. 1, 1892, 117-120.
10. A similar incident is recorded in the life of a saintly French friar, Father Jean Baptiste de Beauvais, who lived at the same time as Father Frederic. In his advice he often repeated: "My brethren, don't be afraid of tiring me — I will rest later, when I get to heaven. You know that I am always in the church, except from one to two o'clock. So you can find me in

the confessional or in a corner near the foot of the altar. Now if you should sometimes find me asleep, don't be shocked: a dog can sleep a bit at his master's feet." P. Celestin Marie Sant, O.F.M., *Le Révérend Père Jean Baptiste de Beauvais, missionnaire franciscain* (Paris, 1912) p. 151.

11. *The Franciscan Review* (Montreal) 12, 1916, 291.

12. Fr. Benoît, O.F.M., "Le T. R. P. Frédéric," in *Almanach de saint François* (Montreal, 1917).

13. Unpublished notes of Father Xavier Ricomes, O.F.M.

14. P. Frédéric de Ghyvelde, O.S.F., *Vie de saint François d'Assise* (Montreal, 1894) p. 20ff.

CHAPTER 21. "COME, LORD JESUS!"

1. Letter to Father Colomban Dreyer, guardian of the Montreal friary, Quebec City, April 9, 1902. His stomach illness is mentioned in letters dated April 7, 1889, May 10, 1895, September 14, 1898, May 5, 1903; and intestinal pains in letters of May 3, 1896, April 17, 1907, September 4 & 10 1907.

2. Letter of May 18, 1900.

3. Letter to the Very Rev. Ange Marie Hiral, O.F.M., Provincial Commissary, February 16, 1913.

4. These words of St. Paul are often found in his letters: July 30, 1891; November 21, 1892; January 20, 1893; September 24, 1902; March 14, 1911; etc.

5. Good Father Augustin died a few months after his faithful friend, on January 8, 1917, in Trois Rivières, at the age of seventy-five. His remains rest in the community's cemetery at the far end of Father Frederic's Crypt.

6. *Le Bien Public* (Trois Rivières) August 24, 1916, and *Annales du Très Saint Rosaire* 25, 1916, 376-381.

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